AYYAPPAN HYMNS
OF *KAḶAMEḶUTTU* IN NORTH MALABAR
A Historical Study

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The Malayalam translation of the book *Ayyappan Hymns of Kalameluttu in North Malabar : A Historica Study* was published with an additional section featuring an ancient historical account that discusses the idea that Ayyappan was once regarded as a Buddhist deity, under the title *Bhagavan Ayyappan Oru Bouddhadevan* by Sign Books, Thiruvananthapuram, in May this year.

Shibi K.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This volume constitutes part of a systematic initiative undertaken by the Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR), in collaboration with the Department of History, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, to publish primary source materials of historical significance. Under the general editorship of Professor N.J. Francis, this publication series, designated as the History Research Series, features individual volumes prepared by specialized editors. The present work represents the second instalment in this series, edited by Dr. Shibi K., and is entitled *Ayyappan Hymns of Kaḷameḻuttu in North Malabar: A Historical Study*. Dr. Shibi has undertaken the meticulous task of procuring the original manuscript from Sri Kariyil Satheesan Theyyampati, subsequently transcribing and translating it to facilitate scholarly engagement with the source material, its interpretive dimensions, and the premodern historical processes of North Malabar.

The volume comprises devotional compositions performed within the ritual framework of Ayyappan worship, encompassing the broader geographical terrain of North Malabar, with particular emphasis on the region extending from Kannadipparamba in Kannur District to Keezhoor in Kasaragod district. It is anticipated that this publication will attract substantial scholarly attention and contribute meaningfully to historical and cultural studies of the region. Acknowledgment is due to Professor N.J. Francis for recognizing the scholarly merit of this document and commissioning its editorial preparation by Dr. Shibi K. Gratitude is extended to Dr. Shibi for

her diligent efforts in locating, editing, and contextualizing the text through an introductory scholarly apparatus. Finally, appreciation is expressed to the publication division of the KCHR for their role in bringing this volume to fruition in its present form.

Dinesan Vadakkiniyil
Director
Kerala Council for Historical Reesearch

GENERAL EDITOR'S NOTE

Sources for understanding the past often remain unnoticed till searched for by dissatisfied seeker, and seldom speak unless asked for, which sounds academically irrelevant or even less fashionable; but this is partly relevant in the opening up of a small but significant archive of palmleaf manuscripts pertaining to Kaḷameḻuttu, recovered from the northern part of the erstwhile Malabar region of Kerala.

Although the existence of a written tradition of the ritual-songs and performance of Kaḷameḻuttu loomed large as early as 1918, when C. P. Govindappilla published the old songs of Malayalam, including some Kaḷam songs collected largely from Travancore, and subsequently by the 1920's, when the Mangalodayam Press at Trichur collected and published some Kaḷam songs, mainly from central Kerala, the manuscripts of Kaḷameḻuttu or of Kaḷampāṭṭu eluded scholarly attention and the historians' craft.

Even when Chelnat Achyuta Menon bemoaned, in his *Kāḷī-Worship in Kerala* published by the University of Madras in1943, that though the cult of Kāḷi worship in Kerala "... is so universal most of its ritualistic and mystical aspects are known only to a privileged few who will never share them with others even for life," he stated clearly that "My readers can very well imagine my surprise when I discovered there a palm leaf manuscript and an incomplete printed version of Dārukavadham-Kaḷampāṭṭu, during my sojourn there." This was a clear reference to Menon's own examination and study of the manuscripts of Kaḷameḻuttu in the archives of the Oriental Section of the British Museum, London, during 1937-'38 though the same records referred to by him were not part of his *Catalogue of the Malayalam Manuscripts in the India Office Library*, published

by Oxford University Press, in 1954. Scholars since working on pre-modern Kerala's religious and cultic milieu, or else on the institutional and social formations in medieval Kerala, or else on literary cultures on the eve of colonialism never considered this manuscript tradition, its literary value, and the religiosity it encapsulated.

It is in this context that the palm leaf manuscripts dealing with Ayyappan-hymns of Kaḷameḻuttu from north Malabar, studied by Shibi K., become valuable as a new source material for understanding a religious and ritual tradition of pre-modern Kerala that escaped the attention of historians by default. Shibi's opening remark that studies conducted so far have concluded that non-Brahman rituals existed as oral tradition and that the non-Brahman rituals including Kaḷameḻuttu survived as rituals devoid of any historical origins is indeed critical of the extant approach to the studies on the history of religion, religiosity, and the social dimensions of religion in pre-modern Kerala. Shibi states further that the history of non-Brahman *bhakti* in Kerala, hitherto unexplored, is found chronicled in the palm-leaves in question.

The palm-leaf manuscript, being edited and published here, forms part of a wider tradition of Kaḷameḻuttu in pre-modern Kerala, which, if studied along with the similar literary tradition already noticed and highlighted by the scholars mentioned above, can open a slightly different pattern of religiosity outside the realm of the Brahmanical temple. Such an archive, if constituted, would go a long way in raising different concerns regarding the social, religious, and even literary history of the pre-modern days. Accommodation of this genre of archival collections in Kerala historical studies may surely needless of finding out space and resource, but more of academic inclusiveness and disciplinary accommodation.

This study forms Volume II of *History Research Series*, a collaborative initiative of the Department of History, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, and the Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR), Thiruvananthapuram. I am indeed happy that the attempt of the Department of History, SSUS, at encouraging its researchers to locate new sources and bring

out perspectives with verifiable evidence at hand is yielding result in the form of the *History Research Series*. Even when theoretical breakthroughs are achieved in the social sciences, Kerala historical studies cannot move ahead and forward without more of source materials on how the people of Kerala recorded, from time to time, their perceptions, and their world. The reading of the sources may vary and differ, as there is no finality to skill, scholarship, and opinion, but the process of archiving must go on, as part of which this volume rolls out of the press.

The Department of History, SSUS, Kalady, is much beholden to the KCHR for the recognition it bestowed upon our faculty and researchers in agreeing to publish the *History Research Series*, in particular to Prof. K. N. Ganesh, its Chairperson, for ensuring that scholars without voices can sometimes matter; to Prof. Dinesan V., Director of KCHR, for the hassle-free environment for the *Series* though its General Editor made occasional hassles by his ineptitude to keep schedules agreed upon; and to Ms. Sandhya S. N., who lead the publication team at the KCHR, for ensuring the best of practices in the production of this book though I usually failed to respond timely to her kind reminders.

Professor M. V. Narayanan, former Vice-Chancellor, SSUS, Kalady, was largely responsible for enlivening an otherwise silent proposal for the publication of a Series, kept in cold storage for many reasons.

The personal and academic warmth at the Department of History is largely responsible for the birth of the *History Research Series*, for which I am indebted to all my colleagues in the Editorial Board of the *Series* at the Department, particularly Prof. Susan Thomas, presently Head of the Department, and Member, Executive Council, KCHR, who reminded me of the need to comply to agreed duties and obligations; Prof. K. M. Sheeba, also Member, Executive Council, KCHR, who was largely responsible for seeing the proposal of the *History Research Series* lived on to see fruition; and Dr. Abhilash Malayil, Assistant Professor, for the benefit of a round of discussions on the nature, structure and contents of the *Series*.

The Department of History expresses its thanks to Dr. Shibi K., who has long been after the history and social dimensions of Kaḷameḻuttu in the pre-modern context of Kerala, for sharing the digitised manuscripts at her disposal and editing the Ayyappan hymns of Kaḷameḻuttu in North Malabar as part of the *Series*. Shibi criticised the significance attached by a group of historians of Kerala to the prevalence of *Kēraḷōlpatti* tradition as the prime and authentic historical springboard to begin the writing of the history of medieval Kerala, in one of her previous publications.

Dept. of History	**N. J. Francis**
SSUS, Kalady	General Editor
2nd December, 2025	History Research Series

PREFACE

Our understanding of the history of Ayyappan remains imprecise. Most existing studies on Ayyappan are rooted in puranic and folk traditions. In brief, the prevailing belief is that the cult associated with Ayyappan originates from a nomadic tradition, sustained primarily through oral transmission, and lacking concrete historical foundations. As a result, neither contemporary scholarship nor public perception has been prepared to acknowledge the worship of Ayyappan as an expression of bhakti. Traditional academic perspectives have typically regarded only the worship of Siva and Visnu—practised within Brahmans—as legitimate forms of bhakti. However, a vibrant devotional tradition, arguably stronger than the brahmanical worship of Siva and Visnu, has long existed within non-brahmanical societies. This tradition centres on deities such as Ayyappan, the Bhagavati, Cattan, and the Nagam, and flourishes in sacred groves (kavus) outside the sphere of brahmanical temples.

The strong presence of non-brahmanical bhakti is particularly evident in the worship of Ayyappan. This form of bhakti is not limited to oral tradition; it is also preserved in palm-leaf manuscripts. These attest to the historical depth of a devotional practice once dismissed as merely nomadic and ahistorical. In particular, the palm-leaf manuscripts of the Teyyampati priests of North Malabar serve as key evidence in establishing the historical roots of non-brahmanical rituals. These priests have transmitted the Kalameluttu ritual across generations, and we now have access to their preserved manuscripts.

The religious beliefs and ritual practices of non-brahmanical societies are indeed recorded in historical sources. Yet, traditional scholarship has long claimed that such communities played no role in the history of piety. In contrast, this study asserts that these non-

brahmanical religious practices are, in fact, profound expressions of bhakti. The primary objective of this work is to explore the bhakti hymns of Ayyappan, preserved on palm leaves, through a historical lens.

This study examines fourteen leaves on which Ayyappa songs are recorded. Each leaf has two sides. The first side of a leaf is denoted as LF.a, and the other side is denoted as LF.b. Thus, all fourteen leaves have a side a and a side b.

I am deeply grateful to Mr. Kariyil Satheesan Teyyampati of the Mattanur region in Kannur district, who has safeguarded these invaluable palm-leaf manuscripts containing the hymns of Ayyappan. I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to him, his wife Mrs. Bindu, and their children for welcoming me into their home and allowing me the opportunity to examine and study the manuscripts in depth.

I am also thankful to my close friend and expert in ancient scripts, Mr. Santosh Eledath, whose constant support in reading and interpreting the manuscripts brought depth and clarity to my research. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Prof. K. V. Dilip Kumar and Prof. P. Pavithran, eminent linguists who assisted in analysing and translating the songs.

I am grateful to the History Research Series of the Department of History, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, as well as the Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR) and the editorial staff for their readiness to publish this book.

Above all, I dedicate this book to the public, with deep gratitude to my teacher, Prof. N. J. Francis, Prof. K. N. Ganesh, and my other esteemed teachers and dear friends who have supported me unwaveringly throughout this journey.

SHIBI K.

AYYAPPAN HYMNS OF *KAḶAMEḶUTTU* IN NORTH MALABAR

A Historical Study

Studies conducted thus far have concluded that non-Brahman rituals primarily exist as oral traditions. The significant observation derived from these studies is that these rituals constitute folklore lacking historical roots. The central argument across all current studies posits that non-Brahman rituals, such as Teyyam, Tira, Muṭiyēṟṟu, Tīyyāṭṭu, Paṭayaṇi and Kaḷameḷuttu, persist within the realm of rituals devoid of any historical origins. Anthropological and folkloristic observations dating back to colonial times have contributed to the development of this argument concerning non-Brahman society. These studies perceive non-Brahman rituals as ethnographic compositions involving artisans adorned in vibrant ornaments, accompanied by songs that share contemporary memories.[1] An endeavor has been made to establish that the ritual

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1 MV Vishnu Namoothiri's *Mugadarśanam* (1975), Puḷḷuvappāṭṭum *Nāgārādhanayum* (1977), *Māntrika Vidyayum Mantravāda Pāṭṭukaḷum* (1979), *Tōrrampppāṭṭukaḷ Oru Padhanam* (1980),Vaṇṇānum Kenthrōnpāṭṭum (1982), *Folklore Prabandhangal* (2002) and *Folklore Nikhantu* (1989); Chummar Choondal's *Studies in the Folklore of Kerala* (1978), *Muṭiyēṟṟu* (1981), *Puḷḷuvar* (1981) *Natoti*, and *Maṇṇān*; K. K. N. Kurup's; *The Cult of Teyyam and Hero Worship in Kerala* (1973) and *Aryan and Dravidian Elements in Malabar Folklore* (1977); Raghavan Payyanadu's *Folklore* (1986); A. K. Nambiar's *Kseraḷattile Nāṭan Kalakal* (1989), and his PhD thesis 'Ritualistic Songs of North Malabar Related to Exorcism' (1990); G. Bargavan Pilla's *Keralattile Pananmar Pattukal* (2001); Babu Mundekkad's *Kallāttakkuruppanmārude Kaḷamezhuthupattu* (2002); K. M. Anil's *Folklore Janussu Sindhantham*

practices within non-Brahman society primarily exist within an oral tradition. This attempt, in part, justifies Brahmanism, suggesting that solely Brahmanical rituals have historical origins. The essence of all these studies lies in the assertion that only Brahmanical traditions, along with the Vedic-Puranic-Sastric tradition, possess a historical background, while non-Brahman society is characterized as that of nomads devoid of their own settlements, names, and histories.

Colonial studies have contended that the Brahman practice of Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava worship represents a more elevated form of devotion, claiming exclusive legitimacy through support from sacred texts (Iyer 1981c: 354). These studies exhibited reluctance in acknowledging non-Brahman rituals as forms of deity worship or religious practices. Instead, colonialism branded them as devil/demon worship, deeming them inferior and associated with exorcism (Iyer 1981b: 85). Hence, the priests overseeing non-Brahmanic rituals such as Teyyam, Tira, Muṭiyēṟṟu, Tīyyāṭṭu, Paṭayaṇi, Kaḷameḻuttu, and others were perceived by the British government as exorcists and practitioners of devil dance (Iyer 1981a: 155-175, 53, 76, 77). The field of Folklore studies interpreted the oral tradition, employed by colonialism to denigrate non-Brahmans, as a manifestation of popular culture. Up until now, the outcomes of linguistic, literary, historical, and anthropological research indicate that the Bhagavati-Ayyappan-Cāttan-Nāga worship within non-Brahman rituals like Teyyam, Tira, Muṭiyēṟṟu, Tīyyāṭṭu, Paṭayaṇi and Kaḷameḻuttu lacks historical roots. Instead, they appear to be ethnographic compositions created by artisans adorned in brilliantly colorful ornaments, accompanied by songs that encapsulate contemporary memories.

Rakshtriyam (2004); C. P. Govinda Pilla's *Malayalathile Pazhaya Pattukal* (2004); M. V. Lalithambika's *Kaniyanmarude Jeevithavum Samskaravum* (2011); Sathyapal's *Kalamezhuttu: Ritual Art Practice of Kerala* (2011) are all important Folklore studies in Kerala. All of these have interpreted non-Brahman rituals as oral traditions and ethnographic compositions.

Studies have thus regarded the non-Brahman ritual of Kaḷameḻuttu as a distinctly oral tradition among the nomads. These studies concluded that it lacks historical origins, existing solely as ritual narratives passed down through oral songs. This perspective solidifies the historical narrative that only Brahmanical rituals possess palm leaf traditions, shaped through Vedic-Sastric-Puranic ways. Hence, these two assertions—that nomads devoid of history possessed an oral tradition, and Brahmans with historical roots followed Vedic-Sastric-Puranic tradition—were firmly upheld. Despite the robustness of these arguments, there exist extant palm leaf collections that can substantiate the existence of a documented/textual tradition within Kaḷameḻuttu. The palm leaf manuscripts held by the Kaḷameḻuttu priests of North Malabar, known as Teyyampāṭi, stand as ample evidence to establish the historical foundations of non-Brahman rituals.

The Teyyampāṭis are priests who practice Kaḷameḻuttu in the north Malabar. Presently, they exist as two distinct groups: the Teyyampāṭi Nampiārs and the Teyyampāṭi Kuruppus. The earliest reference to the Teyyampāṭis can be found in a 16th-century document within the Kūṭāḷi granthavari, which records the efforts of Kūṭāḷi Nairs patronizing the Teyyampāṭis. The granthavari contains references to the Teyyampāṭis in documents associated with the Kaḷameḻuttu in Kūṭāḷikkāvu. [2] However, there is no specific mention

2 The Kūṭāḷi Nairs represent an influential landlord family in the north Malabar. The Kūṭāḷi granthavari consists of medieval documents that meticulously detail the income and expenditure associated with the land holdings under the purview of the Kūṭāḷi family. Scholars posit that the origins of the Kūṭāḷi family trace back to the period coinciding with the Portuguese arrival. The Kūṭāḷi granthavari chronicles the records of conducting Kaḷameḻuttu rituals at the Kūṭāḷikkāvu (sacred groves of Kūṭāḷi family). Unfortunately, the exact date of the concluding segment of the document remains undetermined. It is within this particular section (Section E) that the costs related to ārāṭṭu (sacred bath) and Kaḷameḻuttu are documented. Document No. 25 and Document No. 26 capture the expenditures linked to antippāṭṭu, uccappāṭṭu and kaḷattilari – the primary components of Kaḷameḻuttu rituals. Furthermore, the quantity of rice allocated to the Teyyampāṭis is also meticulously recorded (Kurup 1989 :127-128).

of the Teyyampāṭi Nampiārs or Teyyampāṭi Kuruppus in the granthavari; rather, they are collectively referred to as Teyyampāṭis. Nevertheless, eighteenth-century Thalassery documents do make separate references to both the Teyyampāṭi and Teyyampāṭi Kuruppu.[3] During the 19th century, Gundert also referred to the Teyyampāṭi as Kaḷattukkuruppu, thereby validating this appellation through the Thalassery Record (Gundert 1999: 480). In essence, it should be comprehended that the priestly Teyyampāṭis who conducted rituals during the medieval era eventually split into two groups, Teyyampāṭi Nampiārs and Teyyampāṭi Kuruppus, in the post-medieval period (Shibi 2016: 20). In any case, we possess palm leaf manuscripts handed down through generations from these Teyyampāṭi priests, who performed the Kaḷameḻuttu ritual in the north Malabar. Four Teyyampāṭi families were devoted to worshiping Kaḷameḻuttu in this region – the Naṭōra, Kuṟṟapaḷḷy, Naṅṅōlattu and Kōṭṭakattu families. These families are now collectively known as Teyyampāṭi Nampiārs. Regrettably, none of these four families have endured to the present day. Only Satheesan Teyyampāṭi and Prakashan Teyyampāṭi, who possess maternal ties within the Naṭōra family, continue to perform this ritual. The palm leaf containing Kaḷameḻuttu hymns is currently under Satheesan Teyyampāṭi's possession. These manuscripts were ceremonially utilized during the later medieval period by the Naṭōra family. The Teyyampāṭis perform hymns venerating deities such as Bhagavati, Ayyappan, Vairajātan, Yakṣi, Vēṭṭakorumakan, Daivattār, Nāgam, and others. The palm leaf containing the hymns of Bhagavati, Ayyappan and Vēṭṭakorumakan is the only one that has survived to this day.

The focus of our analysis lies in the devotional hymns extolling Ayyappan within these palm-leaf complexes. Traditional studies have consistently maintained that non-Brahman societies held no sway in

3 The Thalassery Records constitute a compilation of correspondences and communications exchanged between the residents of northern Malabar and the East India Company. Among the grievances articulated by the local populace to the company, two instances referencing Teyyampāṭi and Teyyampāṭi Kuruppu come to the fore (Skariah 1996: 338-417).

the history of bhakti. However, a potent strand of devotion, eclipsing even the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava reverence of the Brahmans, thrived outside the confines of the Brahmanical temple within non-Brahman society. This devotion centered around deities like Ayyappan, Bhagavati, and Nāga. The robust presence of this non-Brahman devotion is particularly evident in the realm of Ayyappan worship. This devotion is also etched onto palm leaves. The religion and rituals of other societies, including the non-Brahmans, are also recorded in historical documents. These practices themselves are a form of bhakti. The current studies have interpreted them as aspects of tribal life due to these practices being external to the Vedic-Sastric-Puranic traditions of Brahmanical society (Iyer 1981b: 85). The aim of this study is to undertake a historical examination of the Ayyappan bhakti hymns inscribed on palm leaves.

Depictions of Ayyappan in the form of a kaḷam, and hymns of praise sung in recognition of this image as a deity, are documented in inscriptions on palm leaves. Ayyappan is portrayed as a mountain deity.[4] The Ayyappan hymns inscribed on palm leaves cannot exist independently; they require the presence of the Ayyappan deity depicted in the kaḷam.[5] The kaḷam of Ayyappan and its accompanying hymns together create the realm of bhakti. The practice of venerating the kaḷam of Ayyappan by elucidating its iconographic attributes and distinctive traits is evident in these palm leaves.[6] Naturally, these palm leaves document Ayyappan's formidable prowess and his confrontation with wild creatures and the forests atop mountains. The depiction of Ayyappan's kaḷam corresponds in detail to the descriptions found on the palm leaves.[7] The palm leaves belonging to the Teyyampāṭis in northern Malabar serve as recorded sources of the non-Brahman devotion that revolved around Ayyappan. We must delve into the history of this non-Brahman bhakti, an aspect that has

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4 Leaf 1/70, Page 1, 2; Leaf 3/72, Page 1, 2; Leaf 4/73, Page 1; Leaf 5/74, Page 1

5 Leaf 1, Page 1, 2; Leaf 2, Page 1, 2

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

remained unexplored in historical discourse. The central objective of this study is to illuminate the history of non-Brahman devotion by examining the Ayyappan hymns inscribed on palm leaves.

I. ŚĀSTĀVINTE PĀṬṬA: ŚĀSTĀ SONG IN THE PALM LEAF

നടൊറ രാമൻ വക

ഓല 1/70 | പുറം 1

ഇതു ശാസ്താവിന്റെ പാട്ട

കുങ്കുമമാന നൽകുറിതൊട്ടു കുഞ്ചിതമെറി ചെമ്മെ
കൂർത്തൊരു പീലികുന്തെമെടുത്തു നയീവിളികൂട്ടും/

വീരഭംഗിയിൽ നല്ലവില്ലുമെടുത്തു പഞ്ചശരം തൊടുത്തു
പന്നിയെയെതൊരാണയം വാഴത്തും/

ചെകവനെ തൊഴുന്നെൻ. മങ്ങല്യമായുള്ളൊ ചിലെകാവ
ചുറ്റും വിളിച്ചുകൂട്ടി മാമ്പട/

കെഴ വൻപുലി പന്നി കൊന്നരുളുംന്ന വീര അഴകെറും
മാടംമാളിക ചെർന്ന ചെ/

മ്മ്രവട്ടം മരുവും ആരിയർ ഭൂതനായകനെ നിങ്കഴൽക്കിത
കൈതൊഴുന്നെൻ. 1

ഒരുപമിരണ്ട വന്നതുകൊടി നൂറു നൂറായിരം പൊൽ
ഇടയിലൊരുത്തരില്ല തടുപ്പാൻ നിന്തിരുവി/

ള്ളമെതാൻ കരിതുകിലൊത്ത കന്നിടരും പെരിമ്പട പെ
ാന്നിറഞ്ഞാൾ കഴിവീല എതും നമ്മുടെ നാട/

പൊയിതു നീ തടായ്കിൽ - കൊടുപിടിയും പറഞ്ഞു നടന്നു
പൊന വല്ലായ്കളെല്ലാം പൊടു പൊട വീണുകെ/

Contribution of Naṭōra Rāman

Leaf 1/70 | Page 1

This is the hymn of Śāstāvu

Ayyappan is revered as a hunting deity, with their prowess in hunting animals being evident in the songs. The first and second verses (padam[8]) of the song, recorded on the palm leaf, vividly illustrate Ayyappan's hunting skills. Described within the leaves, Ayyappan is portrayed as a Cēkavan (warrior) adorned with saffron on his forehead, wielding a sharp spear while astride a horse, accompanied by hunting dogs. The hymn extols Ayyappan, the figure who expertly fells boars with a skilled bow. Ayyappan is the heroic presence that congregates the faithful around the kāvu, proficiently taking down deer, tigers, and pigs. Praises are offered to āriyar bhūtanāyaka, who dwells within the splendid māṭam māḷika (a type of palace constructed for the residence of kings) of Camravaṭṭam. This constitutes the initial verse of Ayyappan's song. [9]The palm leaves consistently depict Ayyappan as the Śaiva form/equivalent of āriyar bhūtanāyaka. 'It seems as though countless animals are approaching. Only you can halt them.' Ayyappan's domain is not limited to hunting alone – he is also a deity of war. Beyond detailing their adeptness at hunting, the palm leaves portray Ayyappan as a valiant warrior on the battlefield. This is due to their engagement and interest in warfare. Those who engage in combat alongside Ayyappan are also referred to as Cēkavas. Consequently, verses that praise Ayyappan for both hunting prowess and battlefield valor are interspersed throughout the palm leaves. The second verse commences by lauding Ayyappan as the god of war. Our country is powerless unless

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8 A type of short song is called padam. We find the term in Carnatic music.

9 The Ayyappankāvu in Camravaṭṭam is considered the source of all sacred sites of Ayyappan in north Malabar.

you thwart the formidable ranks of black-skinned Kannaṭikas. It's noted within the leaves that 'when you stepped forward and intervened, all foes suddenly succumbed,' illustrating Ayyappan's battlefield mastery. [10]

ഓല 1/70 | പുറം 2

ണ്ടു നടന്നു കാഞ്ഞിരക്കൊടു പുക്കു. ഹരിനൂരപന്നു പെ
ാങ്ങിയെഴുന്നമർന്നരുളുന്ന കീഴൂരമർന്ന/

രുളയ്യനെ ശരണെന്നു കൈതൊഴുതെറ്റു നെഞ്ചെ -2-
മാറ്ററുതാത്ത വമ്പടയൊ/

ട കാറ്റൊടു തീകണക്കെ മഹദെവർ പുത്തിരൻ തിരുവെടര
കടൽ ദിക്കുനൊ/

ക്കി ഊറ്ററിയാതെ പാഞ്ഞൊരു ഭാഗം വമ്മരുവങ്ങെളെല്ലാം
ഉടനുടെനെയ്തു വി/

ല്കാൽ പുക്കു പലകുല മെയ്തങ്ങീട്ടാൻ- തെറ്റ വളന്ന
പന്നിയെയ്തെ വമ്പുലി കുത്തിയാർത്തു തെരു/

തെര വീണു പാഞ്ഞു പാഞ്ഞൊരു ഭാഗം വലയുമുടൻ
കെണിപ്പൊൻ. ആററരികെ കുളുർമ്മയുള്ളെടം/

നമ്മുതുകാട്ടകാവിൽ ആരിയർ ഭൂതനായകനെ നിങ്കഴൽക്കിത
കൈതൊഴുന്നെൻ- 3

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10 This leaf was found from the Naṭōra family. Teyyampāṭis also conducts these rituals in the bordering hilly regions near the Karnataka region. This might explain why the opposing soldiers are described as Kannaṭikas.

Contribution of Naṭōra Rāman

Leaf 1/70 | Page 2

"The defeated enemies, conquered in battle, implored for your mercy and sought sanctuary in Kāññīrakkōṭu."[11] The following line on the leaf reads, "Bowing before Ayyan, who resides in Kīḻūru, where Śiva also makes his abode." In the song, Ayyappan is portrayed as both Śiva's son and Śiva himself. An illustration of this connection is the mention of Kīḻūru as the shared residence of Śiva and Ayyappan. With this, the second segment of the song concludes. Ayyappan is also characterised in the song as 'tiruvēṭar,' the offspring of Mahadevan. The third segment begins by stating, "tiruvēṭar, faced the formidable army that no one could quell, like a fire raging in the wind." Terrified by his onslaught, all the animals fled, oblivious to their allegiance to the land (ūr). Ayyappan's arrows were responsible for the demise of all the animals in his path. The large boar and the imposing tiger met their end due to Ayyappan's arrows. Ayyappan is the one who directs herds of animals toward the sea, encircling and ensnaring them. Homage is paid to 'āriyar bhūtanāyaka,' the reigning deity of the Mutukāṭṭukāvu, nestled in a tranquil spot by the river." This constitutes the third segment.[12]

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11 The reference to Kāññīrakkōṭu on the leaves might correspond to present-day Kāññīrōṭu. In close proximity, there is a Pulidēva temple (dwelling place of the divine tiger) situated in that area. It's possible that the inscription on the leaf pertains to this particular temple.

12 The Mutukāṭṭukāvu holds significance as a notable Ayyappankāvu in Kannur.

നടൊറ രാമൻ വക

ഓല 2/71 | പുറം 1

ശാസ്താവിൻ പാട്ട

ചാർത്തിന നാഗവും കുളുർ തിങ്കൾ ചെഞ്ചിട തന്നിൽ മെവും
ആറൊടെ തുമ്പ ചാമ്പലീടിച്ച പൊന്നിൽ ചില/

മ്പായി-കൂർത്തൊരു ശൂലം വെന്മഴുവും കടുന്തുടി
മാൻകിടാവും മൂത്തപുലിക്കുമെലുള്ള തൊലുത്തു വെണ്ണി/

ർപൂജിചെച്ചമിഴാവതാള മിടക്ക മദ്ദളവും കുമിറം പെരുള്ള
നാടകം പതിനെട്ടുമാടിയ/

കൂത്തരശെ. പർത്ഥനു കൂറ പാശുപദം കൊടുപ്പതു
പറ്റുമൊദാൽ പാർവ്വതിനാഥ്വെ /

നയാ പുര മന്നൻ തമ്പുരാനെ. 4 - ഈ പാട്ട
അഞ്ചതാളത്തിലാണചൊല്ലെണ്ടത്. എനി മൂന്നതാളത്തിൽ/

ആദി ഭൂതതലമകെനായവൻ ആനകുതിര തെരെറി നടപ്പവൻ
തെരും കുതിരെയും ചെകൊരും താനു/

മായി തെടുന്ന കൂട്ടത്തിൽ മുമ്പിൽ കളിപ്പവൻ - ആദിയാം
ചെമ്രവട്ടം മരുവും അയ്യപ്പ പൊറ്റിശര നി/

Contribution of Naṭōra Rāman

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Śāstāvin Pāṭṭa

The fourth verse comprises entirely of lines extolling the puranic embodiment of Śiva. Adorned with a snake encircling his neck, a crescent moon, a river, and a tumpa flower (leucas) nestled within his jaṭa (matted hair), he wears ashes upon his skin and golden anklets. He clutches a skewer, an axe, a tuṭi (a small musical drum), and a young deer in his hands. Such is the depiction of Śiva detailed within these lines of the leaves.

The song reveres Śiva as a kūttaracan (the king of dancers) who executed eighteen dramas known as 'kumiram'.[13] The verses also reveal that miḻāvu, iṭakka, and maddaḷam, crafted from the hide of an aged tiger and smeared with ashes, are employed for rhythm. The lyrics extol Śiva as 'Puramannan Tampurān,' the Lord of Parvati, who joyously bestowed pāśupatam arm upon Arjuna. And so, concludes the fourth verse. In the palm leaves, there are instructions for the priests to recite this song on the fifth rhythm, with the padam to be inscribed recited on the third rhythm. Ayyappan, the ādi bhūtatalamakanāyavan, guides elephants and horses as their charioteer. He embarks on hunting expeditions with chariot, horse, and valiant Cēkavas. He is the one who fiercely battles everyone upfront while hunting. "O deity Ayyappan who once resided in the Camravaṭṭamkāvu at the beginning, you must protect me now, I seek refuge in you."After four verses, another is scribed onto the leaf, once again reiterating the initial verse.

ഓല 2/71 | പുറം 2

ണക്ക. 1 ഭൂമണ്ണെലാദിയിട തക ചെകാവൻ ഭൂതപടയും
പെരുമാളെഴുന്നെള്ളി ആലമ്പെ/

രുന്തഴ തത്തിക പൊന്മുടി ആറതഴയുമായൊന്താളത്തിൻ
മെലെറി. ആരെന്നറിഞ്ഞീല നിന്നെ/

യൊരുവെരും ആയിരം അന്തണർ വെദിയെരാരുമെ. ആദിയാം
കണ്ണാടിപറ/

ന്വമെരും അയ്യപ്പാ പൊറ്റിശരം നിണക്ക. 2.
കെൾക്കാവെണമയ്യൊദെയ്വ/

നിങ്ങൾ കീർത്തിക്കുംനെനെല്ലൊനിഞ്ചാരിതം.നാക്കിലെയിൽ
നല്ലവെള്ളാരിയും നന്നാർവിള/

13 The lyrics might allude to Śiva's tāṇḍava dance. Further research should be conducted on the kūttu known as 'kumiram'.

ക്കും കുളർത്തി നന്നായി പൂക്കുല വെറ്റില ചെമ്പഴുക്ക
പുസ്തകകെട്ടു കണ്ണാടിപീഠം മഹലൊകർ

വന്നു വണങ്ങുമിവിടെ മാർവ്വിടമയ്യപ്പാനിഞ്ചരിതം. 3

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Perumal (God) ascends in a palanquin adorned with decorations such as the 'ālavaṭṭam' (a unique ornamental circular shield or fan), 'tattika' (which might be a type of musical instrument), 'ponmuṭi' (elaborate hair decoration/golden hair), and 'taḷas' (decorative fan). Initially, he descended upon the earth accompanied by renowned warriors (Cēkavas) and the demon army (bhūtappaṭa). Numerous Brahmans who were present here failed to recognize you. This marks the second verse. "O deity Ayyappan who once resided in the Kaṇṇāṭiparampu at the beginning, you must protect me now, I seek refuge in you."[14] O God, may your presence be acknowledged, and we extol your tale. People assemble in this place where you rule and pay homage to your virtues by kindling the perpetual lamp, laying rice, flowers, betel leaves, and arecanut on a banana leaf, offering bundles comprising books, mirrors, and pedestals. This constitutes the third verse.

നടൊറ രാമൻ വക

ഓല 3/72 |പുറം 1

നട്ടിലീതമുള്ള ചെകൊരും താനുമായി നയാട്ട
വെട്ടക്കെഴുന്നെള്ളും നെരത്ത കാട്ടികൾ കൂട്ടങ്ങൾ ക/

ലമാൻ പുലിം കലകട്ടാനാപന്നിമുയലെന്നിവെയെല്ലാം ആട്ടി
വിളികുട്ടിനായി കുട്ടിപായി/

14 Kaṇṇāṭiparampu also holds significance as an important Ayyappan temple in north Malabar.

ച്ചെരാണെയും ചൊല്ലിയവന്റെയും നിർത്തപൊൽ. ആദിയാം ദെയ് വമെ കീഴൂര/

യ്യപ്പൻ വന്നുതാനിപ്പൊളിസ്ഥാനം പൊലികവെ. 4 . ആലാർ വിളങ്ങുമരതാ/

ർ തിരുമകൻ ആർക്കും പെരിമ്പടതന്നിൽ കളിപ്പാവൻ. വെലൊടെ ശൂലവും വില്ലുംകൈ/

കൊണ്ടവൻ വെട്ടക്കു വെഗത്തിലാടി നടപ്പവൻ. ചാലവളർന്ന പുലിപന്നി കൊല്ലപൊൻ ചാ/

ടി വരുമ്പൊൾ ചവിട്ടി പിടിപ്പാവൻ. ആദിയാം കണ്ണാടിപ റമ്പമെരും അയ്യപ്പാ പൊറ്റിശരം

Contribution of Naṭōra Rāman

Leaf 3/72 | Page 1

Cēkavas, renowned throughout the land, alongside Ayyappan, pursued herds of wild buffaloes, deer, tigers, wildebeests, hares, and pigs while on hunting expeditions. He is the valiant force behind the pursuit of all those animals, compelling them to acknowledge his prowess. The primal deity Kīḻūru Ayyappan arrives and takes residence here, infusing life into the surroundings. This signifies the fourth stanza. He is the offspring of Śiva ('haranar putran'), with poison held in his throat. He is the one who engages in spirited play amidst the resounding clamor of the vast army. Ayyappan is a formidable combatant on the battlefield. He kills the tiger and the boar that have achieved full growth. When they all leap in to attack, he not only counters their assaults but also aggressively subdues them by leaping. He is a skilled hunter with a strategic approach. "O deity Ayyappan who once resided in the Kaṇṇāṭiparampu at the beginning, you must protect me now, I seek refuge in you."This encapsulates the fifth stanza.

ഓല 3/72 | പുറം 2

നീണക്ക. 5. പച്ചാനിറമുള്ള പട്ടചുറ്റി പള്ളിവിൽനല്ല പതപി യമ്പും ഒച്ചെയണ/

ച്ചുള്ള നായ്കണങ്ങൾ ഓടും മെരുവത്തിൽ ചുമടും നൊക്കി ഇച്ഛയായി കൊന്നുടൻ കൂറുചെയ് വൊൻ വി/

ല്ലികൾ ചൂടവെടം മണ്ണകത്തിൽ ആദിയാം കണ്ണാടിപറമ്പമെരും അയ്യപ്പാ പൊറ്റി/

ശരം നിണക്ക. 6. മല്ലിക മുല്ലയൊ പിച്ചകെമൊ മന്താരം ചമ്പകം ചെമന്തിയൊ അ/

ല്ലീമലെരുള്ള പൂവകൊണ്ട അമ്പിനാൽചാർത്തപൊൻ തിരുമുടിക്ക ഇല്ലംതഴപ്പുള്ള/

വഴിപാടുകപ്പൊൻ ചെന്നങ്ങിരിക്കുമകകാവുതന്നിൽ ആദിയാം ചമ്രവട്ടം മരുവും അയ്യപ്പാ പൊ/

റ്റി ശരം നിണക്ക. 7. വട്ടാകുടതഴ പള്ളിയൈന്തൊളത്തിൽ വട്ടത്തിൽ തട്ടൊത്ത വെള്ളി തറ/

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Padam six: He is the one donning the green silk robe, wielding the 'paḷḷi villu' (king's bow) and arrow, silently tracking the animals pursued by the hounds, and killing them as he pleases, distributing the hunting meat to all. "O deity Ayyappan who once resided in the Kaṇṇāṭiparampu at the beginning, you must protect me now, I seek refuge in you." He holds dominion over maṇḍakam, the abode of warriors. Padam seven: "O deity Ayyappan who once resided in the Camravaṭṭamkāvu at the beginning, you must protect me now, I seek refuge in you." He presides within the temple, graciously accepting offerings with his sacred hair adorned by blossoms like jasmine, bauhinia, champak, and dandelion. Maṇḍakam serves as the modest chamber where the deity resides.

നടൊറ രാമൻ വക

ഓല 4/73 | പുറം 1

തന്നിൽ വട്ടം തിരുമുടിക്കിഷ്ടം തിരുവിള്ളം വെട്ടും കലിവാൾ വെളിച്ചപ്പാടുള്ളെടം വട്ടമായിട്ട/

കളത്തിലെഴുന്നെള്ളി ദണ്ഡും പിടിച്ചുമയങ്ങി കളിപ്പാവൻ അത്തൽ തീർത്തിടുന്ന രക്തകണ്ഠ/

ൻ വന്നു വന്നു താനിപ്പൊളിസ്ഥാനം പൊലികവെ. 8 . നാലാം പാദം ശാസ്താ/

വിനമുമ്പ എഴുതിയതിപൊലെ ചൊല്ലണം എന്നീ കലാശപാട്ട എഴുതുന്നു. കുടചൂടിവെ/

ള്ളകുതിരയെറി കുലവില്ലുമമ്പും ചുരികയുമായി പടവെട്ടും നെരമപന്നിപിമ്പെ പകചെയ്ത/

വമ്പുലി കൂട്ടത്തൊടെ ഇടിപൊട്ടും പൊലെ രണ്ടൊച്ചകെട്ടു ഇതമൊത്ത ചെകൊരും താനു/

മായി ആദിയാം ചമ്രവട്ടമരുവും അയ്യപ്പാ പൊറ്റിശരം നിണക്ക.

Contribution of Naṭōra Rāman

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Ayyappan arrives in a regal palanquin, accompanied by an ālavaṭṭam, ornamental umbrella, and more. The rituals commence on a circular silver platform. The oracle stands with a sword, cutting himself in a display of anger. God favours the spot where the oracle stands. He is the figure who appears in a circular kaḷam and engages in an entranced dance while wielding a stick.[15] Raktakandhan, the alleviator of devotees' sorrows, arrives to preside over and rejuvenate this location.

15 This event portrays the priest as a manifestation of the deity, dancing in an unconscious trance within a kaḷam.

This corresponds to padam eight. The leaf specifies that the fourth padam should be recited as previously written for Śāstāvu, and following that, the segment to be included in the song is "kalāśapāṭṭu." In the initial padam of "kalāśapāṭṭu," the scene is depicted where Ayyappan and the Cēkavas engage in combat against animals. Ayyappan, mounted on a white horse adorned with umbrellas, along with the Cēkavas armed with bows, arrows, and swords, battles the animals. During this encounter, enraged pigs and large tigers approach them. The leaf also describes a resounding noise akin to thunder during this moment, which symbolizes the intense clash between Ayyappan and the animals. "O deity Ayyappan who once resided in the Camravaṭṭam at the beginning, you must protect me now, I seek refuge in you." This constitutes padam one.

ഓല 4/73 | പുറം 2

കൊട്ടകിടങ്ങൊട കുന്തം ചാരി കുത്തും ചുരിക പനവില്ലമ്പും നൊട്ടകുറിയും തലമുടിയും നല്ല/

കുപ്പായവും പൂണ്ടിരിപ്പൊൻ. വെട്ടക്കെഴുന്നെള്ളും നെരമിപ്പൊളായുധമെന്നതൊ/

രാണചൊല്ലാം ആദിയാം കണ്ണാടിപറമ്പമരും അയ്യമ്പ പൊറ്റിശരം/

നിണക്ക. 2 . ഇന്നിര ചെല്ലികയറച്ചു ചെലെയുടുത്തു കളഭമാടി പൊന്തികയൊടെ പലിശ/

യുമായി പൊവലകെട്ടി തരുത്തു നില്പൊൻ അന്തിയണഞ്ഞൊരു നിപ്പൊളായുധമെന്നതൊരാണ ചൊ/

ല്ലാം ആദിയാം ദെയ് വമെ കുഴൂരയ്യപ്പൻ വന്നു താന ിപ്പൊളിസ്ഥാനം പൊലികവെ.3. ഒപ്പലിട്ടൊടി/

യൊളിവിളിപ്പൊനൊപ്പകത്തികൊണ്ടൊളി ചമപ്പൊൻ മുപ്പതും മുന്നൂറും കൂട്ടത്തൊടെ മുല്പാടവ/

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Ayyappan leaned his spear against the moat of the fort, fully prepared for the hunt with a keen-edged sword, bow and arrows, and a splendid coat. He adorned his forehead with sandalwood paste (nōṭṭakuri. During the hunting event, the oath is to be recited along with the weapon. "O deity Ayyappan who once resided in the Kaṇṇāṭiparampu at the beginning, you must protect me now, I seek refuge in you." This corresponds to padam two.[16] He stands as the formidable figure draped in robes, his form embellished with perfumed sandal paste (kaḷabham), bearing a pontika (wooden sword) and a shield. An oath is to be taken at night, affirming the weapon as the path. The primal deity Kīḻūru Ayyappan (the deity Ayyappan in Kīḻūru kavu) arrives, takes residence, and rejuvenates this place. This represents padam three. The phrase 'oppaliṭṭoṭi/ yoḷiviḷipponoppakattikontoḷi camappon' should be interpreted as 'oppaliṭṭu ōṭi oḷi viḷikkunnavan oppam kattikonṭu oḷi camakkunnavan.' In this way, the prowess of Ayyappan during hunting is elucidated. He is the one who sprints and calls out while hunting, casting light with his knife. The location where hunters prepare to conceal themselves is also referred to as 'oḷi.' In this context, it's possible that the lines imply 'Ayyappan is the creator of the 'oḷikkuṭil' (hiding house) for hunting.'

16 Following this, the phrase 'innira colli' appears on the palm leaf. Notably, there is a Kerala raga known as 'indiśa' (Pilla 1997: 121-122), which might imply the inclusion of the raga in the Kaḷameḻuttu ritual. 'Nōṭṭakuri' could possibly be 'neṭṭa kuri,' signifying the presence of long markings.

നടൊറ രാമൻ വക

ഓല 5/74 | പുറം 1

ന്നമെരികമെല്ലാം അപ്പുലി കണ്ടവർ ഭംഗമെറി അമ്മല കണ്ടു ചിരിച്ചരുളി ആദിയാം കണ്ണാടിപറ/

മ്പമരും അയ്യപ്പാ പൊറ്റിശരം നിണക്ക. 4 . കാലാളിയാകുന്ന ചെകൊരും താനുമായി കാലമെവെട്ട/

ക്കെഴുന്നെള്ളും നെരത്ത ചൂഴവലം തന്നിൽ ശൊഭിച്ചിരിപ്പവൻ ചുഴപെരിമ്പടയാട്ടിക/

ളിപ്പവൻ നായാട്ട കൂട്ടത്തിലെറ്റം കളിപ്പവൻ നായികണങ്ങളാലെറ്റിച്ചു കൂട്ടുപൊ/

ൻ വമ്പനെ മാളികമാടവമ്പും അത്ഭുതം ക്ഷെത്രപാല പൊറ്റി. 5. ഈ പാട്ട ഒക്കെയും ശാസ്താ/

വിനും ദെയ് വത്താരിക്കും ക്ഷെത്രപാലനും ഭൂതത്താരിക്കും രക്തകണ്ഠനും ചൊല്ലാം. ഊർപ്പിച്ചികാവിൽ/

ചൊല്ലുമ്പൊൾ ഊപ്പിഴച്ചി ദെയ് വതാരെന്നും വെള്ളാട്ട ചൊല്ലമ്പൊൾ/

Contribution of Naṭōra Rāman

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All the beasts, numbering from thirty to three hundred in each herd, prostrated themselves before Ayyappan. Those who had previously been defeated by the tiger burst into laughter upon seeing the herds of animals standing like mountains before Ayyappan, and they remarked[17]: "O deity Ayyappan who

17 The meaning behind these lines can be imagined as follows: 'After successfully overcoming all the attacks of the tigers, the devotees eventually reach the mountaintops and encounter Ayyappan, who resides there.'

once resided in the Kaṇṇāṭiparampu at the beginning, you must protect me now, I seek refuge in you." This corresponds to padam four. He shines in the Cola forest when hunting alongside the foot soldiers known as 'Cēkavas,' effortlessly chasing the Cola horde.[18] He stands out as the most skilled among hunters, leading the pack of dogs for the hunt. "O valiant one, divine Kṣētrapālan, who resides in the māḷika māṭam, we implore you to protect us." This is padam five. All of these songs can be sung in honor of Śāstāvu, Daivattār, Kṣētrapālan, Bhūtattār and Raktakandhan.

ഓല 5/74 | പുറം 2

കുന്നാകുർയ്യപ്പൻ ദെയ്‌വത്താരെന്നും
മുഴപ്പിലങ്ങാട്ടചൊല്ലുമ്പൊൾ കെടക്കണ്ണപ്പനെന്നും ഭൂത/

ത്താരിക്കചൊല്ലുമ്പൊൾ മണികണ്ഠനെന്നും ഭൂതത്താരെന്നും
ശ്രീഭുതത്താരെന്നും ചൊല്ലെ/

ണം. അരിങ്കാട്ടിൽ പെരുംവെട്ടക്കെഴുന്നെള്ളും
ഗരുഡമ്മന്നഴകിയകുലവില്ലും ശരവും കൊ/

ണ്ട അരിപ്പത്താർ മകനയ്യൻ കളിക്കുന്നൊൻ
കുതിരമ്മന്നണഞ്ഞൊടിമെരുവത്തിൽ ചുമ/

ടും നൊക്കി. തിരിഞ്ഞു നല്ലിളം ചെകൊർ തിരുത്തെറ
പുലികൊൾവാൻതിരുനെല്ലിപെരു/

മാളൊടരിപ്പം പെശി. ഇരുന്നൊർക്കും വരുന്നൊർക്കും
കൊടുപ്പു നല്ലിത വാതിൽ മലരമ്പൻ മണിവാ/

തിൽ തുറവൊമാതെ.ഇതു എകതാളം.

18 It is more likely that Cōḷavanam means surrounding forest and Cōḷappaṭa means surrounding army. Expression taken from P. Pavithran: Interview, Angadippuram, 03.09.2023

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If the kaḷam song is sung in 'Ūrpaḷaccikkāvu,' the deity should be referred to as 'Ūrpaḷaśśi Daivattār,' and if the song is sung in Veḷḷāṭṭu temple, the deity should be addressed as 'Kunnākūr Ayyappan Daivattār.' While chanting in Muḷappilaṅṅāṭṭu temple, the deity should be named Keṭakkaṇṇappan. When praising the Bhūtattār, one should invoke the deity as Manikaṇḍan, Bhūtattār, and Śrībhūtattār. Ayyappan, the son of Śiva, engages in a great hunt within the expansive forest, wielding his bow and arrow. Mounted on Garuda (aquiline), he hunts fervently.[19] Young Ayyappan is the one who, upon glimpsing the tiger's tracks, swiftly turns his horse and eliminates the threat. He readily opens the adorned door, welcoming both visitors and occupants without hesitation. A line in the text also indicates that he confided his challenges to Tirunelli Perumal.

നടൊറ രാമൻ വക

ശാസ്താവിന്റെ കളത്തിലാട്ടം

ഓല 1 | പുറം 1

ഉണ്ണി തിങ്കളും മാലകളും പീലിമുടിയും ഉറ്റാതൊടകയും
തൊലു വളകൾ പൂണ്ടഴകിൽ വർണ്ണത്തിൽ/

കറുത്തുള്ള തിരുമെനി അഴകും വട്ടതാടിയും നന്നായി
വളർന്ന കണ്മിഴിയും മിന്നും തീമിന്നൽപൊലെ ചു/

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19 This verse should be recited with a single rhythm. Tirunelli Perumal is Viṣṇu. The leaf also reveals that Śaivite Ayyappan utters 'arísam' to Viṣṇu. 'Ariśam' also translates to 'become angry,' hinting at a potential Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava conflict. Garuda serves as Viṣṇu's vehicle. The song portrays Ayyappan as synonymous with Śiva, while concurrently identifying him as Hari's offspring. The phrase 'Ayyappan rides on Garuda' signifies his association with Viṣṇu's divinity.

രികയുമിളകീ ധീരതയൊടു ലൊകം നിറഞ്ഞു നിൽപവൻ
താൻ. നിർത്തം വെച്ചിളകീടും ചമ്രവട്ടം മ/

രുവും ഹരിഹരപുത്തിരനിനന്തിതതൊഴുന്നേൻ. 1
പൂമാലതുളസി പൊൻമണിമാല/

തൊഴുന്നെൻ ഭൂതിയിലുണച്ചയൊ വെടികൊട്ടൊ തൊഴുന്നെൻ.
അമ്മാനം കുഴൽ വീണനലഗി/

തം തൊഴുന്നെൻ ആനന്ദന്ന ധ്വനിതാളം കളഭം
കൈതൊഴുന്നെൻ. കൊമരമിളകിന തിരുനിർത്തം തൊ/

ഴുന്നെൻ. കൊൽവാളൊ കടുത്തില പിടിച്ചകൈ തൊഴുന്നെൻ.
വീരൻ വിരിയൻ ഭൂതനാഥൻ വിരവിൽ വീരെനാ/

യി വരും മുമ്പിൽ തുണക്കെണം നമുക്ക. 2 അലങ്കാര കളം
കണ്ടുവലത്തും വെച്ചഴകിൽ അരങ്ങത്ത കളിച്ചപൊ/

Contribution of Naṭōra Rāman Śāstāvinte Kaḷattilāṭṭam

Leaf 1 | Page 1

This song is intoned as part of the kaḷattilāṭṭam[20] dedicated to Śāstāvu. 'Ayyappan is elegantly adorned with a crescent moon, necklaces, peacock feathers in his hair, sturdy earrings, and rings on his shoulders. His complexion is dark, his physique exquisite, featuring a rounded chin and expansive eyes. He radiates courage, illuminating the world with the splendor of his 'curika' akin to lightning. Lord Hariharaputra, who dances and resides in Camravaṭṭam, with thoughts of you, I humbly offer my reverence. This corresponds to padam one. I bow before your garlands woven from flowers, basil, and gold. I bow before the propitious fireworks, a ritual that extols you. I bow before the enchanting melody crafted from the 'ammānam-flute' (a

20 The deity's form (kaḷam) is created on the ground using coloured powders. Recognizing that image as a deity and performing a sacred dance in front of it is referred to as the kaḷattilāṭṭam ritual.

type of musical instrument) and lute, dedicated to your praise. I bow before the joyful rhythmic cadence of the song and your 'kaḷabham.' I bow before your sacred dance that even moves the oracles. I bow before your hands that wield the 'kolavāl' (a sword used to kill) and 'kaṭuttila' (sword with curved blade). Bhūtanāthan, descending as a hero upon the earth, may you be our eternal aid. This constitutes the second padam.'

ഓല 1 | പുറം 2

യി കുളിച്ചു മാറ്റുടുത്തു വലം കയ്യാൽ ചുരിക വാളിളക്കി കൊമരം താൻ കളന്തന്നിലഴിയുമ്പോൾ ക/

നിന്തതൊറ്റമെല്ലാം വലങ്കാതിൽ കുലമ്പും കെട്ടി രസിച്ചു വിറച്ചു വരുന്നെരല്ലലും പാട്ടും കള/

വും തെങ്ങയെറും. വലം കയ്യാൽ പുലികൊല്ലും മുതുകാട്ട/

കാവിൽ ആരിയർഭുതനായകനെ കൈതൊഴുന്നെൻ. 3 ചടു പിടനെ തകർത്തു വെളി/

ച്ചപ്പാടൊരു വാളെടുത്തു തകിടയിലാടി മെൽ വിദാനങ്ങൾ വീശുമവൻ വരുമ്പൊൾ. ഉടനുടെനെവെ/

ലിച്ചൊരു പീഠമിട്ടത്തിൻ മെലിരുന്നു. തുടുതുടനെ മിഴിച്ചൊരു കണ്മയക്കിവരുന്നനെരം പൊടു/

പൊടമാറുനൊക്കിന നൊക്കങ്ങെ തൃക്കിലെരിഞ്ഞുപൊമെ. ഭുവനമെല്ലാം ഞ്ഞടുങ്ങ വിളിച്ച/

Leaf 1 | Page 2

Having beheld the adorned kaḷam, the oracle gracefully danced within the designated area on the right side. Following this performance, the oracle proceeded to take a bath, change his attire, sing a ceremonial song, and sway the sword with

his right hand as he danced before the kaḷam. He wears an earring in his right ear and dances in a trance. Concurrently, rituals like the ceremonial song, kaḷam and tēṅṅayēru (a ritual of coconut breaking) unfold. Here, I pay my respects to you, āriyar bhūtanāyakan, who resides in Mutukāṭṭukāvu, and who subdues the tiger with his right hand. This constitutes the third padam. With rapid movements, the oracle unsheathed a sword and synchronized his dance to its rhythm. All the decorative canopies suspended above the kaḷam were sliced through by his sword's movement during his sacred dance.[21] A pedestal was promptly brought forth, and the oracle seated himself upon it. His eyes reddened and immediately flashed with brilliance, while his gaze grew intense, conveying both drowsiness and an extraordinary intensity. It's as if his gaze possessed an incinerating power.

നടൊറ രാമൻ വക

ഓല 2 | പുറം 1

ഘൊരവല്ലുന്നതൊ നീ അഴകെറും മാടം മാളിക ചെന്ന
ചമ്രവട്ടംമരുവും ആരിയർ ഭൂതനായ/

കനെ നിങ്കഴൽക്കിതകൈതൊഴുന്നെൻ. 4.
മാടത്തിൽമീത്തലൊ മാളികതന്മെലൊ മണിയ/

റയിലെ മണിതൂണുംമെലൊ മഹദെവർ മുമ്പിലൊ പീഠത്തിൻ
മീത്തലൊ പീടിre/

പ്പൊരുള്ളിലൊ പെരുമ്പടയിലൊ നിറം
വരുമാറങ്ങീരെഴുലൊകത്തൊ ആടിക/

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21 This is how the leaf describes the fierce, trembling dance of oracle, almost akin to the deity's own movements. In contemporary times, during the kaḷam ritual, the ceilings are adorned with flowers, kuruttōla (coconut leaf) and leaves.

ളിപ്പവൻ ആപത്തൊഴിപ്പവൻ അഴകെറും നല്ലതൃച്ചളരി തന്നിൽ വസിപ്പവൻ. നീടുറ്റനി/

ർമ്മലൻ ഹരിഹരപുത്തിരൻ നിറം വരുമാറ്റങ്ങിരുന്നരുളെണം കാത്തരുളെണമെ. 5. കുന്നെല്ലാം കൊ/

ൽമാനാവെദം മുമ്പായി കുന്നൊളം തെങ്ങകിടെന്നതെല്ലാം ഒന്നെഴിയാതെ തക

Contribution of Naṭōra Rāman

Leaf 2 | Page 1

You are the one whose terrifying scream causes the earth to tremble. All praise to you, āriyar bhūtanāyaka, who resides in the splendid māṭam māḷika of Camravaṭṭam. This corresponds to padam four. Ayyappan holds sway in the niche, the palace, the 'maṇittūn' (a pillar decorated with precious stones) of 'maṇiyara' (a room decorated with precious stones), in front of Mahadeva, upon the pedestal, and amidst the mourners. Ayyappan, the one who dances magnificently among vast armies and the fourteen worlds, acts as the guardian of devotees, residing in the auspicious realm of Tṛśśilēri. [22] May the mighty Lord, the offspring of Harihara, abide here with great vigor, overseeing us. This constitutes padam five.

ഓല 2 | പുറം 2

ർത്ത നിന്നൊടൊന്നുണ്ടുണർത്തുന്നു ഞങ്ങളിപ്പൊൾ എന്നൊടവന്നല്ലൽതീർക്ക വെണം എന്നും നിണക്കി/

തകൈതൊഴുന്നെൻ- ഇല്ലം തിരുവഞ്ചകുളം വാഴും ഹരിഹര പുത്തിര കൈതൊഴുന്നേൻ. 6. വാഴുമന്നൊർക്കും/

22 Tṛśśilēri stands as a significant Ayyappa temple in medieval Wayanad.

മകമ്പടിക്കും ചെമ്മെ വാഴ്ച കൊടുത്തു വലംകയ്യാൽ
നിർത്തപൊൻ ചെകമായിനിന്നെ തൃക്കുന്ന മാറ്റാർ

കുലം ശെഷിയാതെ കൊന്നൊടുക്ക വല്ലുന്നവൻ. വെലൊടെ
ദാരമാം മെല്പിടും കൈവിടും/

മെയ്മെലുറഞ്ഞു തുണക്കും ഭയങ്കരൻ-കൊൽവാളം
കൊമരംകാരാകുറ (കും) വില്ലുംകൊണ്ടാടും/

മയ്യപ്പാ കൈ തൊഴുന്നെൻ. 7

Leaf 2 | Page 2

The coconuts that were piled like a hill in front of Manavedan, without leaving even one, O one who scattered them all, we beseech you.[23] I implore you to accompany me and alleviate all my afflictions. Here, I extend my humble gesture to you, the offspring of Harihara, reigning in Tiruvañcikkaḷam. This corresponds to padam six. You bestow authority upon Vāḻunnavar (feudal chieftains) and Akampaṭi (assistant of feudal lord) to govern. You stand as their right-hand Cēkavan, eradicating rival clans without leaving any trace. Ayyappan is the ferocious deity who enters the body of the dancing oracle. I pay homage to you, the wielder of 'kolavāl,' the oracles, and the bow. This constitutes padam seven.[24]

23 In the leaf, 'kunnalakōn mānavēdan mumpāyi' is seen as 'kunnellam mānāvedam munpāyi.' These could possibly be discrepancies that arose during the transcription process.

24 In this context, the priest is depicted as dancing unconsciously due to the presence of the deity within his own body. The 'kunnalakōn mānavēdam' mentioned in the leaf refers to a Samutiri raja in the late medieval period (Ayyar 1938: 216, 306-307).

II. WHO IS THE DEITY AYYAPPAN?

There has been significant controversy in recent Kerala history regarding the identity of Ayyappan. The question of who Ayyappan truly was stirred a great uproar. To put it simply, Ayyappan is a deity associated with hunting. In the pre-modern era, non-Brahmans worshipped Ayyappan. Colonial records consistently depict Ayyappan as the hunting deity revered by non-Brahmans. Anthropological observations by individuals like Samuel Mateer, William Logan, Herman Gundert and Anantha Krishna Iyer reaffirm that Ayyappan is indeed the hunting deity for non-Brahman communities (Mateer 2006: 75-76; Logan 2000: 172; Gundert 1999 : 46; Iyer 1981a: 313). The colonial documents mentioned above document that Ayyappan is the deity worshipped by non-Brahmans, including Malayarayans, the Cānnārmār, the Īḻavas, Kāṭar, Puḷḷuvar, Kaṇiyānmār, Vālanmār, Mukkuvar and Nairs. Interestingly, the British administration did not perceive Ayyappan worship as traditional deity veneration. Instead, they interpreted it as a manifestation of devil worship and animism (Iyer 1981a: 80; Gundert 1999: 354). Their focus was primarily on recognizing Vedic tradition of the Arya-Brahmans as religious worship. Specifically, they classified only the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava cults and practices of the Brahmans, practiced within the Purana-Sastra-Smriti tradition, as religious and associated with deity worship. Colonial perspectives labeled these practices as a more advanced form of worship (Iyer 1981c: 354). Conversely, all non-Brahman practices were categorized in colonial records as lower-tier forms of worship, devil worship, or animism (Iyer 1981b: 85; 1981a: 155-175, 11-53). Ayyappan worship, along with Bhagavati and Nāga worship, was dubbed devil worship in these records and it was simultaneously seen as symbols of Dravidian culture (Thurston, Rangachari 1993: xix; Iyer 1981a: 1, 69; Iyer 1981c: 339). In essence, within colonial studies, Ayyappan could be interpreted as both a devil and a tribal deity associated with devil worship. Regardless, historical records from the colonial period undeniably depict Ayyappan as a significant hunting deity among non-Brahman societies.

We find numerous references in medieval documents that indicate Ayyappan is not exclusively of Brahman origin. Additionally, the reference in the Cilappatikāram indicates that Cāttan is a Buddhist deity. The Cilappatikāram labels Cāttan as "Pāṣanṭa bhairavanām Cāttan" (Nair 1992: 146), while the Buddhists are referred to as "Pāṣanṭar" (Chakrabarti 2001: 148). A Guhanāthaswāmi inscription from Kanyakumari dating back to the 12th-century holds the key to asserting Ayyappan's non-Brahman origins. The inscription reads "Ayyappan vēdiyanām Cāttan" (Rao 1988: 246; Poduval 1990: 76). Hence, a twelfth-century inscription suggests that Ayyappan is the vedic/aryan version of Cāttan. Even the Kēraḷōlpatti granthavari, believed to have been written post the medieval period echoes a similar content, with a focus on Ayyappan. Its content revolves around the worship of gods on the mountain as Śāstāvu, for the prosperity and growth of families (svarūpams). The Kēraḷōlpatti goes on to state that six Brahmanic villages were organized to serve by reciting durmantra to counter the influence of mountain deities (Varier 1984: 3-5).[25] Thus, Ayyappan was venerated across Southern India under various names like Ayyan, Ayyanār, Ayyanāyake, Śāstāvu and Cāttan. Insights into Ayyappan's worship are garnered from inscriptions such as Neṭumbramtaḷi (900AD), Tṛprangōṭṭu (910AD), Kollūr Matham (1188AD), Tiruvalla (12AD) and Guhanāthaswāmi (12AD). Records depict Ayyappan as being associated with Ayyan, Ayyanār and Cāttan.[26]

Ayyappan is a mountain deity. Within the Ayyappan hymns, we encounter the heroic figure of Ayyappan, who combats the wilderness and wild creatures. The practice of worshiping Ayyappan

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25 These are: 1) Aṭikaccēri in north Malabar; 2) Kaṇiyōṭu in Karikkāṭu grāma; 3) Kakkāṭṭu in Ālattūr grāma; 4) Putukkōṭu in Śukapuram grama; 5) Kallakkāṭṭu in Peruvanam grāma and 6) Cūṇḍakkāṭu in Irinjalakkuta grāma (Varier 1984: 3-5).

26 The Mūṣikavamśakāvya mentions Valabha II constructing a temple in honor of Ayyappan (Arya) (Unni 1980: 120). Uṇṇiyaccicaritam is likewise referenced at the Ayyan kōvil (temple) located near the temple of Tirunelli (Nair 1997: 53).

is commonly referred to as Maṇḍala worship, also known as Maṇḍala viḷakku. Anantha Krishna Iyer observes that various non-Brahman groups like the Nattumalayar, Pulayar, Kaṇiyānmār, Vālanmār, Īḻavar, and Nairs, all engaged in Maṇḍala worship (Iyer 1981a: 33, 115, 223, 239, 312-314, 1981b: 84-85). This form of worship entails creating an image of Ayyappan on the ground using coloured powders and venerating it as a deity. This method of worship extends to deities like Bhagavati, Nāgam and Cāttan. Notably, societies from the Maṇṇāns, Īḻavas, Teyyampāṭi Nampiārs, Teyyampāṭi Kuruppus, Tiyyāṭi Nampiārs, and Kallāṟṟa Kuruppus, held prominent roles as priests in the Maṇḍala worship of Ayyappan. Colonial records indicate that offerings of fowls and sheep were made in Maṇḍala worship (Ibid: 223). There are also indications of goat sacrifice in documents found in Śabharimala (Santhosh 2019: 59). These rituals are associated with pañcamakāra worship, involving the use of liquor, meat, fish, mudra and maithuna. The Europeans labeled this practice of Ayyappan worship with blood offerings as demon worship. Iyer highlights that primarily non-Brahmans, including Nāyāṭis, Uḷḷāṭanmār, Parayar, Pulayar, Vēṭṭuvar, Kaṇakkar, Puḷḷuvar, Vēlar, Pāṇar, Vilkuruppu and Īḻavar were the main proponents of Ayyappan worship (Iyer 1981a: 53, 64, 79, 112, 131, 143, 151, 168, 178, 183, 314). Similarly, Śāstāvu, the Brahmanic equivalent of Cāttan, received devotion not just from Brahmans, but also from non-Brahman groups. This included non-Brahman communities like the Kaṇiyānmār, Mukkuvar, Vālanmār, and Īḻavar (Ibid: 222, 273, 239, 312-314). In summary, both Brahmans and non-Brahmans iterations of Cāttan were revered within the non-Brahman society. Likewise, the Brahmans worship Cāttan in a form they consider to be non-Brahman. This tradition continues today, with Brahman families like Puñcaman illam and Kāṭṭumāṭam still worshiping Cāttan in this manner (Parpola 2012: 179-181).

In short, Ayyappan, who was a mountain deity or a hunting deity, was brahminised and transformed into Śiva during medieval times. This process of brahmanisation is extensively documented in medieval records. The significant effort to brahmanise Ayyappan was undertaken through Kēraḷōlpatti legends and bhakti hymns within the context of Maṇḍala worship. Both of these assert that

Ayyappan and Cāttan assume Śaiva forms (Gundert 1868: 108). The association of Ayyappan with Puranic literature also transpires during the medieval period. The myth portraying Ayyappan as the son of Śiva and Viṣṇu (son of harihara) emerged as part of the brahmanization process during this era. It's notable that virtually all Ayyappan devotional hymns incorporate the chant "hariharaputtira nin kaḻalkkita toḻunnen" (Oh son of harihara I bow to you). The themes present in Cāttan's devotional hymns mirror the essence of brahmanization. These hymns convey that Cāttan is born to Śiva from a Paraya woman. Various forms of Cāttan exist, with Karinkuṭṭi, Parakkuṭṭi, Tīkkuṭṭi, and others being particularly important among them (Parpola 2012: 176-188). Legends always narrate that the forms taken by both Ayyappan and Cāttan are rooted in Śaivism. The palm leaves containing the songs of Ayyappan that we have seen above us are the most significant material evidence of this brahmanization process. It is these leaves that we now need to examine further.

III. THE STUDY ON PALM LEAF MANUSCRIPTS CONTAINING AYYAPPAN BHAKTI HYMNS

The bhakti hymns dedicated to Ayyappan were inscribed within the palm leaf manuscripts of the Teyyampāṭis in north Malabar during a phase of brahmanisation that unfolded in the medieval or post-medieval period. These manuscripts were written in the 19th century. However, upon closer examination of the songs, it becomes evident that they are replicas of texts written in more recent times. These palm leaves provide a window into the undocumented realm of non-Brahmanical bhakti. Embedded within these palm leaves are instructions detailing when to chant the hymns and how to perform the kaḷam (image of deity) ritual. The palm leaf collection of the Teyyampāṭis contradicts the notion that non-Brahman rituals like Kaḷameḻuttu lack support from sacred texts and are solely reliant on oral tradition. The historical process of brahmanisation within non-Brahmanical bhakti finds expression within the Ayyappan bhakti hymns contained within these palm leaves.

a. Ayyappan the hunter and warrior

Upon closer analysis of the song, the most prominent aspect of its content emerges as the character of the deity Ayyappan. Throughout the song, we encounter lines that distinctly portray Ayyappan as the mountain god and the hunting deity. Each of the eleven padams within song, as documented in the leaf, vividly delineates his heroic might. The song portrays him as a hero leading a formidable army into the forest with bow in hand. Furthermore, he is depicted as a warrior Cēkavan who engages in battle astride "a white horse with an umbrella, bow, and arrow." The song extols Ayyappan's prowess as he pursues and hunts herds of wild buffalo, deer, tigers, wild elephants, boars, and rabbits. The imagery within the text portrays him as a valiant Cēkavan, riding horseback with a finely honed spear and accompanied by hounds. The hymn lauds Ayyappan, the warrior, who expertly fells a boar with his finely honed bow. He stands as a hunter capable of single-handedly subduing a myriad of animals.[27] The leaf refers to him as 'tiruvēṭar,' underscoring his exceptional hunting prowess.

Ayyappan skillfully struck down all the animals that dashed about, unaware of their surroundings. His arrows brought down a fully grown boar and a massive tiger. He possessed the ability to drive herds of animals towards the sea and ensnare them. The third section of the song illustrates Ayyappan's hunting in this manner. The song iterates multiple times that Ayyappan leads the charge during hunts, acting as the foremost warrior, the most adept among hunters. He hunts quickly with the sword, spear and bow in hand.[28] He is the one who quickly kills the animals that come close to attack and the one who jumps and beats the animals that jump to attack.[29] The song also describes how, during Ayyappan's engagements with animals,

27 Leaf 1/70 Page 1

28 Leaf 1/70 Page 1; Leaf 3/72 Page 1; Leaf 5/74 Page 1

29 Leaf 3/72 Page 1

thunderous noises reminiscent of thunderclaps echoed.[30] Ayyappan is portrayed as the distributor of the hunted animals' meat among all participants in the hunt.[31] Various weapons like spears, palm bows, arrows, knives, and elaborate bow and quiver sets are mentioned in the song as Ayyappan's hunting tools. It's also stated that he skillfully wields both knife and bow in hunting, showcasing the prowess of the hunter Ayyappan. The eleven sections recorded on the palm leaves revolve around Ayyappan, a non-Aryan hunting deity mentioned in pre-modern historical records. The leaves extol the attractiveness of Ayyappan's ebony body. Describing Ayyappan as black also hints at a non-Aryan veneration of him.

Ayyappan is a fierce and warlike deity. The song also elaborates on Ayyappan's inclination towards war, simultaneously glorifying his prowess in hunting. Ayyappan is depicted as a "Cēkavan leading the large army." The song characterizes Ayyappan as a Cēkavan due to his fervor for battle. Those who accompany Ayyappan are also referred to as Cēkavan. The second padam commences by depicting Ayyappan as the god of war. The leaf mentions that when Ayyappan confronted the vast army of Kannatikas, all adversaries suddenly succumbed, signifying Ayyappan's battle prowess. The song describes how the foes vanquished by Ayyappan beseech him,[32] and he strides into battle alongside his formidable warriors and Cēkavans and Bhūtappaṭa ('demon' army).[33] Ayyappan orchestrates the movements of the grand army, producing resounding noises,[34] and emerges as a formidable figure who combats with pontika (wooden sword) and shield.[35] He

30 Leaf 4/73 Page 1

31 Leaf 3/72 Page 2

32 Leaf 1/70, Page 1, 2

33 Leaf 2/71, Page 2

34 Leaf 3/72, Page 1

35 Leaf 4/73, Page 2

effortlessly drives the formidable Cola army,[36] brandishing a curika that gleams like lightning,[37] filling the entire world with courage,[38] and dancing radiantly amidst the massive forces.[39] These descriptions collectively extol Ayyappan as the god of war. Medieval records attest to Nāṭuvāḻi Svarūpams venerating Ayyappan as the war deity. We've also explored medieval records of Nāṭuvāḻi Svarūpams venerating Ayyappan for the prosperity of their svarūpams (families) (Varier 1984: 4). The practice of feudal lords worshipping Ayyappan as the god of war in kaḷari dates back to the medieval era, with indications found in the granthavaris (Zarrilli 2002: 26; Gurukkal 2000: 20). This tradition is reflected in the kaḷam song of Ayyappan, wherein Nāṭuvāḻis and feudal lords also praise him as the god of war.

b. A realm of non-Brahman Bhakti centered around Ayyappan

We have previously indicated that the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava worship is generally regarded as bhakti. This devotion emerged among the Arya Brahmans during medieval times, centering around the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava temples (Subbarayalu 2012: 20, 209; Champakalakshmi 2012: 16, 53-197; Narayanan, Veluthat 2002: 385-410; Heitzman 1997: 82-113). As mentioned earlier, it represents a heightened form of worship rooted in Vedic-Sastric-Puranic tradition. There is no bhakti in the history of non-Brahman worship. There is no devotion in their deity worship. Their cults lack the strength and support of sacred texts. Their practices are merely folkloristic or demon worship, devoid of religious rites. Their gods are perceived as devils, and their priests are exorcists. These perceptions are widely prevalent regarding the religion of non-Brahmanical societies. Historical evidence that challenges these preconceptions we held until now emerges from the

36 Leaf 5/74, Page 1

37 A small type of sword that is sharp and pointed on both sides.

38 Leaf 1, Page 1

39 Leaf 2, Page 1

palm leaves under examination. The palm leaves we are analyzing here constitute the textual traditions of non-Brahman worship. These texts elucidate the rituals practiced by non-Brahman societies. Not only the worship of Ayyappan, but also that of Bhagavati, Nāga and Cāttan, is documented in this manner within these palm leaves. The Maṇṇānmar, Kaṇiyānāmar, Pulḻuvar, Nairs, Kuruppus, Teyyampāṭis, and others similarly possess collections of palm leaf traditions for various worship systems. The non-Brahman community plays a significant role in the devotion to Ayyappan, Bhagavati, Nāga and Cāttan. The Teyyampāṭi hymn to Ayyappan stands as a prime example of this non-Brahman bhakti.

The phrase "Ayyappan poṟṟi śaram niṇakka," which translates to "god Ayyappan, you are my refuge," is repeated nine times throughout this song. The song illustrates a method of praising Ayyappan by recalling the primary sacred locations associated with him. The song's verses emphasize that Ayyappan reigns in ancient sacred sites such as Kaṇṇāṭiparambu and Camravaṭṭam.[40] Kaṇṇāṭiparambu and Camravaṭṭam are significant sanctuaries devoted to Ayyappan, with the Ayyappan kāvu in Camravaṭṭam holding particular importance during medieval times. The Vaññēri granthavari and Kōḻikkōṭan granthavari provide insights into the Ayyappan kāvu in Camravaṭṭam (Narayanan 1987: 27; Varier 2004: 37, 57). The song also consistently extols Ayyappan in sacred sites like Mutukāṭṭukāvu, Muḻappilaṅṅāṭu and Kīlūru. Through these hymns, we glean information about the Ayyappan kāvus that held prominence when the hymns were documented in the palm leaf. A similar approach seen in the practice of praising Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava temples in bhakti hymns is employed when praising Ayyappan through phrases like "camravaṭṭamaruvum āriyar bhūtanāyakane ninkaḻakkita kai toḻunnen", "Mutukāṭṭukavil āriyar bhūtanākane ninkalakkita kai toḻunnen" and "ādiyām Kaṇṇāṭiparampamarum ayyappa poṟṟi śaram niṇakka".

40 Leaf 1/70, Page 1; Leaf 2/71, Page 1, 2; Leaf 3/72, Page 1, 2; Leaf 1, Page 1; Leaf 2, Page 1

Hymns praising the supernatural power of Ayyappan are documented in the palm leaves. He reigns over the fourteen worlds and dispels all dangers for his devotees there.[41] The song chronicles Ayyappan's heroic feats in hunting and warfare. He is celebrated as the valiant warrior Cēkava who rides a white horse. The song designates Ayyappan as the central figure of devotion, extolling his courage, weaponry, and adornments. Within the palm leaf, there are verses entreating Ayyappan to reside here as the god who alleviates the sorrows of his devotees,[42] protects them,[43] constantly aids them,[44] joins them, and eradicates their troubles.[45] Devotees worship Ayyappan by offering cucumbers, coconut blossoms, betel leaves, arecanut, bundles of books, mirrors, and pedestals on banana leaves, while keeping a nanthār viḷakku (perpetual lamp) lit.[46] The leaves also contain lines that express the devotion shown to him through the garlands around his neck, the songs, the rhythmic chants, the sacred dance of the oracle, and the hand holding the oracle's sword and "katuttila" (a sword with a curved mouth) are all offered with reverence.[47] Almighty Ayyappan bestows blessings and strength upon his devotees. The level of devotion to Ayyappan as the ruler of the fourteen worlds is vividly depicted in the hymns dedicated to him in the kaḷam ritual. This sentiment is evident in the palm leaves as well.

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41 'Ayyappan irēḻulōkaṅaḷil āṭikaḷippavanum āpattoḻippavanum' is explained in the lyrics. Leaf 2, Page 1

42 Leaf 4/73, Page 1

43 Leaf 2, Page 1

44 Leaf 1, Page 1

45 Leaf 2, Page 2

46 Leaf 2/71, Page 2

47 Leaf 1, Page 1

c. Ceremonies to be Conducted in Kāvus during Kaḷameḻuttu Ritual

Clear depictions of kāvu ritual procedures are found within the palm leaves. The palm leaves contain explicit accounts of Kaḷameḻuttu rituals such as Kalāsappāṭṭu, kaḷam, Kaḷattilāṭṭam, tēṅṅayēru (throwing coconuts), sacred processions, and the dance of the oracle. These palm leaves not only provide instructions for the songs but also detail the specific rituals that the priests must undertake during the course of the Kaḷameḻuttu. The oracle, standing on a circular silver platform, performs a dance with a sword, displaying fury. The records mention that a kaḷam is made in a circular form, and the oracle proceeds with a sacred procession to the circle before engaging in a ecstatic dance while holding a stick.[48] This context illustrates how the priest, while dancing in a state of unconsciousness, is described as embodying the deity. Kalāsappāṭṭu refers to the culminating ritual song sung in kaḷam. The palm leaf also documents the details of Kalāsappāṭṭu, featuring a five-padam song.

The oracle's dance in the kaḷam (it is called Kaḷattilāṭṭam) is the most pivotal ritual of the Kaḷameḻuttu. The prescribed song and rituals for the Kaḷattilāṭṭam are meticulously detailed in the leaf. Fireworks, an ode to Ayyappan, the rhythm of the song, and the sacred dance of the oracle are all integral components of the Kaḷattilāṭṭam.[49] Following the adorned kaḷam, the oracle begins the dance from the right side of the platform. Subsequently, the oracle bathes, changes attire, takes the sword in hand, recites a ritual song, and dances atop the kaḷam. The song, kaḷam, and tēṅṅayēru unfold as the oracle wields the sword and moves to the rhythm.[50] All adornments on the oracle's body must sway in harmony with the dance. The oracle then takes a seat on a pedestal, frequently opening and closing their reddened eyes with a semi-drowsy demeanor, while maintaining a severe gaze

48 Leaf 4/74, Page 1

49 Leaf 1, Page 1

50 Leaf 1, Page 2

that appears as if it could ignite everything it beholds. These are the prescribed behaviors for a priest during the Kaḷattilāṭṭam. Following the Kaḷattilāṭṭam, the tēṅṅayēru ceremony commences. The oracle must smash all the coconut offerings, lying like a hill without leaving a single one.[51] It's also mentioned that the oracle trembles due to the presence of the fearsome Ayyappan within, blessing him.[52] As we discussed earlier, Ayyappan is venerated by offering cucumbers, flowers, betel leaves, arecanuts, bundle of books, mirror, and pedestal on banana leaves, accompanied by the lighting of lamps.[53] These constitute the core elements of worship in today's Ayyappan kaḷam. Ayyappan adorns a crescent moon, necklaces, potent earrings, and shoulder bracelets. The document describes Ayyappan as having soft hair, a black body, a rounded chin, large eyes, and clutching a curika.[54] The kaḷam depicts Ayyappan in this form. For a priest consulting these palm leaves, there are explicit instructions on conducting the Kaḷameḻuttu ritual within a kāvu.

d. Methods for Transforming Ayyappan into the Śaiva Manifestation

The bhakti hymns played a pivotal role in assimilating Ayyappan into the Śaivite form during medieval times. In Kerala, similar to other parts of South India, the devotion of the Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism became intertwined with the expansion of Puranic religion during the medieval era. Saints like Nāyanārs and Ālvārs actively propagated and practiced Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava cults with the backing of royalty. The Śaiva maṭhas, received endowments and gifts from kings and trade organizations.[55]Since medieval times, this transformation process

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51 Leaf 2, Page 1, 2

52 Leaf 2, Page 2

53 Leaf 2/71, Page 2

54 Leaf 1, Page 1

55 Bhakti evolves into a potent ideology during the Pallava-Pandya (7th-9th c AD) and Cola periods (9th-13th c AD). The creation of bhakti hymns and their rendition within temples owes much to direct royal

extended to all non-Aryans deities, who were molded into Śaiva forms. Kerlolpatti asserts that non-Brahman deities such as Muntiyan, Guḷikan, Kuṭṭiccāttan and Karuvilli were incorporated into the Śaiva pantheon. This refers to the medieval process of integrating non-Brahman deities into the Śaiva pantheon. Keraḷōlpatti granthavari signifies the installation of Śāsta in Western Ghats to appease durdēvata, replacing the earlier mountain deity through durmantra.[56] This unmistakably indicates the brahmanic assimilation of a non-Brahman mountain deity. Following the establishment of Śāsta in Western Ghats over the 'durdēvatas', it evolved into a haven for brahmanical deities. Additionally, Keralolpatti proclaimed that this brahmanised Ayyappan represents a Śaiva form (Gundert 1868: 108). The medieval brahmanisation of Ayyappan in the Śaiva manifestation is also evident in the available texts.

The hymns of Ayyappan in the palm leaf have been completely transformed into the Śaiva form. There is no padam in this leaf that doesn't affirm Ayyappan as a Śaiva form. The first padam of the Ayyappan hymns begins by stating that he is the Śaiva form 'āriyar bhūtanākan.' Throughout the leaves, we see that all Ayyappan temples are inhabited by the Śaiva form of 'hariharaputran/āriyar bhūtanākan.' In this way, the leaves say that hariharaputran resides in the Camravaṭṭam kāvu.[57] Ayyappan is described in the song as the son of Śiva and Śiva himself. There is a mention of Kīḻūru temple as the sacred place where Śiva and Ayyappan reside.[58]Ayyappan is also

endorsement (Champakalakshmi 2012: 77). The Śaiva maṭhas, backed by royal patronage, emerged as the guardians of both bhakti literature and the Śaiva Siddhanta canon. The bhakti hymns of Tiruvancikkulam, *Perumal Tirumoḻi, Mukundamāla, Āścaryamanjari, Tapatīsvayamvaram, Subhadrādhananjayam,* and others were all composed under the patronage of medieval Kerala kings (Narayanan 1996: 217).

56 "malayarikil sastavineyum pratisticcu... malayinnu varunna durdēvatakaḷe taṭuppān durmmantram seviccu durdēvatakaḷe taṭuttu nirttuka ennum aruḷi caitu..." See for the text (Varier 1984: 3-5)

57 Leaf 1/70, Page 1; Leaf 1, Page 1; Leaf 2, Page 1

58 Leaf 1/70, Page 2

described as 'tiruvēṭar' (sacred hunter). This 'tiruvēṭar' is depicted as Śiva's son in the leaf.[59] The song mentions that the Śaiva form 'āriyar bhūtanākan' also resides in Mutukāṭṭukāvu, which is the main Ayyappan temple in Malabar.[60] The fourth padam consists entirely of lines praising the iconography of the Puranic Śiva. He wears a snake around his neck and has a crescent moon, river, tumba flower, and ash in his jaṭa (matted hair). Śiva in his Puranic form is portrayed wearing a golden anklet on his feet and holding a spear, an axe, a musical drum, and a baby deer in his hands. This depiction of Śiva in the Puranic form is recorded in the palm leaf.

It is observed that Śiva is referred to as "the king, known as kūttan, who performed eighteen dramas called kumiram through dance" in two instances in the song.[61] The true meaning of these lines is not easily discernible. These lines might allude to Śiva's tāṇḍava dance. Further investigation should be conducted regarding the kūttu called 'kumiram'. The song also praises Śiva as 'pura mannan tampuran, the Lord of Parvati who gladly bestowed Pasupata upon Arjuna'.[62] We also encounter in the text the portrayal of Ayyappan as the son of Śiva with a poisoned neck.[63] The text also narrates Ayyappan hunting from the top of Hari's vehicle, Garuda. These lines aim to establish the Saiva-Vaisnava connection with Ayyappan.

We come across the epithet "Hariharaputra reigned in Tiruvañcakkaḷam" in the song.[64] It is uncertain if Ayyappan, who was positioned in a corner outside the Tiruvañcakkaḷam temple, has been described in this manner. However, the usage indicates that the

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Ayyappan is described as "kumiram peruḷḷa nāṭakam patineṭṭum āṭiya kūttarase" in the song. Leaf 2/71, Page 1

62 Ibid.

63 Leaf 3/72, Page 1

64 Leaf 2, Page 2

primary deity of Tiruvañcakkaḷam is Ayyappan. In any case, there are several instances in the song where Ayyappan is described as a synonym of Śiva. To be exact, the song praises both the temples of Śiva and the kāvus of Ayyappan. The palm leaf asserts that all Ayyappan kāvus are in fact Śaiva temples. We cannot find a single passage in the palm leaves that does not state that Ayyappan is the son of Śiva or Śiva himself.

e. Instructions given to the priests for making Ayyappan into the Śaiva form

The palm leaf's most significant feature is its instructions on how to perform these Ayyappan bhakti hymns. This leaf precisely records the instructions provided to the priests in a clear manner. It outlines the rhythm in which the song should be sung, the manner of recitation, the order of lines to be recited first, and those to be recited at the end. For instance, "The fourth padam should be recited as previously written for Śāstāvu... Now composing the song to be sung at the end... This song is to be recited in the fifth beat... Now recite it in the third rhythm"... These instructions for the Kaḷameḻuttu priests are consistently documented in the palm leaf. Likewise, the palm leaf explicitly specifies the name of Ayyappan for each sacred site. Priests are directed to address the deities as 'Ūrpaḻacci Daivattār' in Ūrpaḻaccikkāvu, Kunnākūr Ayyappan Daivattār in Veḷḷāṭṭu temple, Keṭakkaṇṇappan in Muḻappilaṅṅāṭṭu temple and Bhūtattār as Maṇikaṇḍan, Bhūtattār and Śrībhūtattār.[65] Why is it recommended that Ayyappan be referred to by different names at the various sacred sites of Ayyappan? What is the rationale behind not using only the name Ayyappan everywhere? These instructions have a distinctive characteristic. The instructions within this palm leaf signify a form of brahmanisation. In this way, the name Ayyappan has been frequently referred to as Maṇikaṇḍan and Harihara-putran, signifying the process of brahmanising the old non-Brahman Ayyappan. A priest who adheres to this palm leaf's practices will no longer address the god of Veḷḷāṭṭu temple or the deity of Muḻappilaṅṅāṭṭu temple as Ayyappan.

65 Leaf 5/74, Page 1, 2

Instead, they will exclusively use the terms Maṇikaṇḍan, Bhūtattār or Śrībhūtattār, indicating complete brahmanisation. Specifically, all synonyms of Ayyappan associated with Maṇikaṇḍan or Bhūtattār are distinctively Śaiva forms. Over time, Ayyappan gradually came to represent Maṇikaṇḍan, Bhūtattār or Śrībhūtattār. This is how the revival of Śaiva influence is achieved through bhakti hymns. These songs have been sung for generations in all the kāvus of Ayyappan in north Malabar, where the Teyyampāṭis perform Kaḷameḻuttu rituals, thus contributing to the widespread and strengthening of Śaivism. Consequently, the Veḷḷāṭṭu Ayyappa temple has entirely evolved into a Śaivite temple today. Ayyappan is consistently depicted in the palm leaves as the son of Harihara and the Bhūthanāyaka ('demon hero') of the Aryans. The recurring epithet in these songs is intentionally written to affirm the Śaiva form of Ayyappan. Through these devotional hymns, chanted by generations of priests within the shrines, the deity Ayyappan undergoes a transformation into the Śaiva form. These indications emerge from the instructions provided to the Teyyampāṭi priests in the palm leaves.4

f. The Medieval Power Structure as Depicted in the Songs

The song contains implications about the medieval government and power system of Kerala. In the context of this, the oracle of Ayyappan breaks coconuts before the Sāmūtiri king Mānavēdan.[66] It is commonly understood that Mānavēdan ruled the country in the 17th century.[67] History does not record a scenario where the

66 Leaf 2, Page 1, 2

67 There are many kings named Mānavēdan in Malabar. It is not clear whether the reference is to Mānavēdan, who is believed to have ruled in the 17th century. Opinion stated by K.N. Ganesh. Interview, Thiruvananthapuram, 24.07.2023; Opinion stated by V. V. Haridas. Interview, Calicut University, 27.07.2023. In any case, in the light of other historical evidences mentioned in the leaf, we can assume that he is a Sāmūtiri king who ruled in the 17th century.

Zamorins held dominance in northern Malabar.[68] The manner in which the Zamorin is integrated into the ritual song as a symbol of royal power remains unclear. The act of breaking the coconut in front of him suggests a reference to his royal authority. Additionally, the palm leaf mentions that Ayyappan was granted power as a Cēkavan, serving as a war aide to Vāḻunnavar (feudal chieftain) and Akampaṭi (assistant of feudal lord).[69] Nāṭuvāḻi Svarūpams worship Ayyappan as the god of war. We have observed that Ayyappan is portrayed as a courageous Cēkavan with supernatural prowess in hunting and war. This valiant fighter is said to be empowered as a Cēkavan, assisting Nāṭuvāḻi and Akampaṭi. The Kēraḷōlpatti granthavari emphasizes worshiping Ayyappan for the growth of Svarūpams. Ayyappan and his soldiers are described as Cēkavar in the song, representing the military forces of medieval chieftains. References to Ayyappan and his accompanying warriors battling against the Kannaṭikas and Colas symbolize the recurring conflicts between medieval kings. All these references within the leaf provide insight into the formation of power dynamics among medieval chieftains and feudal lords. Furthermore, the palm leaf includes an instance where a thousand Anthaṇas or Vedis (Brahamans) failed to recognize Ayyappan as they saw him approaching in a chariot.[70] These lines might signify the Brahmans' duty and role in legitimizing Ayyappan as a deity. Collectively, these instances offer glimpses into the medieval power structure embedded in the songs.

g. Similarities between Ayyappan Hymns and Vaṭakkanpāṭṭus

The Ayyappan hymns also exhibit the rhythm of Vaṭakkanpāṭṭu, believed to have been composed during colonial times. The lyrics "paccāniramuḷḷa paṭṭacuṟṟi paḷḷivil nalla patapiyampum occeyaṇa/

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68 Opinion stated by K.N. Ganesh (24.07. 2023) and V. V. Haridas. Interviews, 27. 07. 2023.

69 Leaf 2, Page 2

70 Leaf 2/71, Page 2

cculḷa nāykaṇaṅal ōṭum meruvattil cumaṭum nokki icchayayi konnuṭan kūruceyvon" are set to the tune of a Vaṭakkanpāṭṭu (Leaf 3/72, Page 2). The usages, similes, words, and contexts found in the Ayyappan hymns are paralleled in the Vaṭakkanpāṭṭus. Hero is portrayed as a Cēkavan in both Vaṭakkanpāṭṭus and Ayyappan hymns. Just as feudal lords employ Cēkavas as escorts, Vāḻunnavar employs Ayyappan as a warrior (Leaf 2, Page 2). Similar descriptions of Ārōmal Cēkavar's combat are also found in the case of Ayyappan's battles. Ārōmal Cēkavar bathes, applies sandalwood paste on his body, dons a golden garment, and engages in a duel. The oracle of Ayyappan is described in a similar manner (Leaf 1, Page 2). Both Ārōmal Cēkavar and Ayyappan are depicted as warriors prepared for battle, with their spears resting on their backs, in both Ayyappan hymns and Puttūrampāṭṭu (Leaf 4/73 Page 2; Panikkotty 1999: 109). The Vaṭakkanpāṭṭu also includes lines akin to the reference in the palm leaf about the Brahmans' lack of regard for Ayyappan. The reference in the Puttūram song indicates that a group of Nairs did not show respect to Ārōmal Cēkavar and his father.

Ārōmal Cēkavar goes to ankam (duel) accompanied by shouts and Chinese gunfire (Panikkotty 1999: 170). Similar occasions are praised in the context of the Kaḷattilāṭṭam ritual of Ayyappan (Leaf 1, Page 1). The main weapon of Ayyappan and Anka-Cēkavas was "Curika." In the leaf, the fight between Ayyappan and the animals is described as being as fierce as a thunderbolt (Leaf 4/73, Page 1). The Matilērikanni's song includes the line "Ponnan who fights like thunder" (Nambiar 1994: 12). Words like 'manṭakam, kūttu, nāṭakam and nalla cēkor' found in the leaf are echoed in the Vaṭakkanpāṭṭu. The lyrics in the palm leaf "kelkkaveṇam ayyo deyve niṅgal...." bear resemblance to the lyrics in the Vaṭakkanpāṭṭu, "onnunṭu kēlkkēṇam uṇikkōnāre" (Panikkotty 1999: 323) and "rārāmaccēkōre kēlkkavēṇam" (Sreekumar 2013: 231). The style of "maṇikkaṭṭimmal kayyum piṭiccaṅṅiruttunnunṭe" in Puttūram song (Ibid: 126) is reminiscent of "garudammannaḻakiya kulavillum.... kutirammannananṅṅoṭi...." in Ayyappan hymns (Leaf 5/74, Page 2). The song describes the sacred dance performed by Ārōmal Cēkavar when he goes to duel as

"nālukāluḷḷōru pīdham veccu
pīdham mukaḷiloru pāvaṭayum
....taḷika nirayōlam veḷḷariyum
veḷḷarimēloru nālikēram
nālikērattinmēl cempaḻukka..." (Ibid: 330)

Devotees worship Ayyappa by offering these objects (Leaf 2/71, Page 2). The sacred dance of Ārōmal Cēkavar bears many similarities to the dance of the oracle. Anka-Cēkavar in the Puttūram song and Ayyappan in the hymns share the same authority and status. Both have "koṭikkūra, taḷas, ālavaṭṭam, venjāmaram" and umbrella (Leaf 2/71, Page 2; Leaf 3/72, Page 2; Panikkotty 1999: 178). The leaf provides strong evidence that the priest who composed the bhakti hymns of Ayyappa was intimately familiar with the Vaṭakkanpāṭṭus.[71] They are linked through language usage and ritual contexts. Similarities might have emerged during the copying of the leaves in the 19th century. However, this isn't the only aspect to consider. In the songs of the Kuruppus and Tīyyāṭis, Ayyappan is depicted as a Cēkavar. This topic requires extensive research for a comprehensive understanding.

h. An ancient South Indian musical tradition that persists within the Kaḷameḻuttu Ritual

Kaḷameḻuttu songs are generally considered by scholars to lack a raga tradition.[72]This argument has arisen among scholars due to the influence of Brahmanical interpretation. However, songs similar to ragas such as kānakkurinnī and puranīra are also found in Kaḷameḻuttu songs. The kaḷam songs also seem to bear resemblance to some nāṭan śīlukal. In Ayyappan's song, we come across a line "innira

71 It has already been discussed in the studies that the Kaḷameḻuttu songs, which are similar to the Puttūram songs, were written by the feudal lords to the lower castes. This discussion was started by MR Raghava Varier (Varier 1982: 76-96). G Bhargavan Pilla also observes that Puttūram songs were written by feudal lords (Pilla 1993: 24, 25, 30).

72 Opinion stated by Sreevalsan Tīyyāṭi. Interview, Ernakulam, 25.07. 2023

sings". Here innira is probably indiśa raga.[73] Kallāṟṟa Kuruppus are observed singing some ragas in the Kaḷameḻuttu. Presently, they sing ragas like śankarābharaṇam, malahari, and madhyāvati (Mundekkad 2002: 103). Kuruppus are also observed singing ragas in Muṭiyēṟṟu. They sing ragas like kēdāragouḷam, sāvēri, kābōji, balahari, and madhyāvati (Choondal 1981: 98-112). All of these might have started being sung more recently. However, ragas like kānakkuriññi, puranīra, indiśa and indaḷam are remnants of the ancient South Indian musical tradition (deśi ragas) and are sung in Sōpāna music, Kūtiyāṭṭam and Kathakali (Pilla 1997: 121; Nair 2003: 76). Kunjan Nambiar's Tullal works provide indications of these ragas. His Govardhanacharita mentions singing indiśa raga (Nair 2003: 76). The singing of indiśa in Ayyappan's song should be understood as a present continuation of those old Tamil ragas. The Tamil tradition of innisai has survived as indiśa in Kaḷameḻuttu, Sōpāna music, Kūtiyāṭṭam, Kathakali and Tullal works. Indiśa can also be seen in the āṭṭapprakāras of Kathakali. Kānakkuriññi, puranīra and indiśa are all āṭṭappāṭṭu (song for dance) ragas (Pilla 1997: 121). Ayyappan's song is also intended for dancing. It is mentioned that indiśa is recited on that occasion. The songs in the Ayyappan Tīyyāṭṭu show similarities to ragas like kānakkuriññi and puranīra, perhaps because those songs were also composed for āṭṭam. In any case, it can be understood that there is a continuity of the ancient South Indian musical tradition in Kaḷameḻuttu, Sōpāna music and Kūtiyāṭṭam. The most significant indication of this is the reference to the singing of indiśa in the Kaḷameḻuttu.

IV. PERIOD OF PALM LEAF

It is stated in the palm leaf that it belongs to Naṭōra Rāman, who was a Kaḷameḻuttu priest living at the end of the 19th century.[74] The current palm leaf was authored by him in the late 19th century. The leaf showcases language styles that emerged after the implementation

73 Opinion stated by Raman Nampiar. Interview, Thruppunithara, 25.07.2023

74 Opinion stated by Kariyil Satheeshan Nampiar. Interview, Kannur, 07. 07. 2023.

of the British printing system. The number "seventy" is written as "൭൦" in the palm leaf, whereas it was previously written as "൭൰" before the British printing system was introduced. This particular practice is not present in the palm leaf. Malayalam language has a practice of writing an arrowhead-shaped symbol (^) beneath the words when any words are missing and the missing word is written above the symbol.[75] This practice, observed throughout the palm leaf, coincides with the advent of British printing. Prior to British influence, the missing word used to be written below the sentences. In essence, the paleography of the palm leaf suggests that it was written between 1850 and 1900.[76]

However, upon examining the contents of the palm leaf and considering the nature of the ceremonies described, it seems more likely that they were written during the medieval period. It is possible that the current palm leaf we have is a copy of older palm leaves. Within this leaf, numerous instances of transcription errors can be observed. Anyway, there is a medieval record in the Kūṭāḷi granthavari that Teyyampāṭi priests used to sing in the Kūṭāḷikkāvu. The palm leaf-bearing priests of today's Kaḷameḻuttu rituals in the Kūṭāḷikkāvu are likely their descendants. Teyyampāṭis can also be found corresponding with the British East India Company in the 18th century, and their presence can be traced through later colonial records as well. In summary, historical records from the medieval period refer to Kaḷameḻuttu priests known as Teyyampāṭis. The mentioned Sāmūtiri king Mānavēdan, who appears in the song, is known to have ruled the country during the 17th century. In the song, the temple Camravaṭṭam is considered the root of Ayyappan worship. The records in the Kōḷikkōṭan granthavari regarding Camravaṭṭamkāvu also date back to the 17th century. The power structure discussed in the palm leaf can also be traced back to medieval times. Although the

75 Among the marks used in proofreading, the '⁁' symbol is used to 'add something new to sentences'. This symbol may have been transformed into an arrowhead. Information collected from K. V. Dileep Kumar. Kalady 04. 01. 24

76 Opinion stated by Santhosh E. Interview, Thrissur, 06. 08. 2023

song is heavily imbued with the literary style and characteristics of the 19th century, glimpses of medieval tradition are also evident within it. The process of transforming Ayyappan into a Śaiva form seems to have been ongoing since the twelfth century. The Kēraḷōlpatti granthavari, suggests that the non-Brahman mountain god should be worshiped as Śāstāvu during the late medieval period. This process of reshaping the Ayyappan song of Kaḷameḻuttu into a Śaiva form aligned with the Śaiva revival movement of the medieval era.

The absence of the crescent symbol (ᵕ) in the palm leaf writing provides further evidence that the leaf was in circulation before the colonial printing system came into play. Similarly, the writing methods characteristic of the medieval and late medieval periods are evident in the leaf. For instance, 'etirkkuka' is written as 'etrkkuka'.[77] This style can be seen in the works of Eḻuttaccan.[78] There is a mention in the leaf that Ayyappan resides in radiant Tṛśśilēri,[79] which is an important Ayyappan temple in medieval Wayanad. In medieval times, Tṛśśilēri was referred to as "Tṛccaḷari." It is mentioned in the 13th-century Uṇṇiyaccicaritam. (Nair 2016: 69, 97). This medieval term is also seen in the palm leaf. The leaf states that Ayyappan engages in warfare against the Colas. The historical period of conflict with the Colas also traces back to the medieval era (Narayanan 1996: 115-148). The song's lyrics seem to have been organized in the kākaḷi structure, a poetic form that existed during the medieval period. The lines "Ārennarinnīla ninne/yoruverum āyiram antanar vediyerārume" on Leaf 2, page 2/71 and the lines "naṭṭilītamuḷḷa cekorum tānumāyi nayāṭṭa veṭṭakkeḻunneḷḷum neratta kāṭṭikal kūttaṅal k/lamān pulim kalakattānapannimuyalenniveyellām āṭṭi viḷikūṭṭināyi kūṭṭipāyi/ cceräṇeyum colliyavanteyum nirttapol. ādiyam deyvame kīḻūra/ yyappan vannutānippoḷisthānam polikave. ālār vilaṅūmaratā/r tirumakan ārkkum perimpaṭa tannil kaḷippāvan. velote śūlavum villukai/konṭavan veṭṭakku vegattilāṭṭi naṭappavan. cālavalarnna puli panni kollapon cā/ṭi varumpol caviṭṭi piṭippāvan" on Leaf 3, page

77 "ninne tṛkkunna māṟṟar kulam..." Leaf 2, Page 2

78 Opinion stated by K. V. Dileep Kumar. Interview, Kalady, 25. 07. 2023.

79 Leaf 2, Page 1

1/72 are written in kākaḷi vṛtta. The Kākaḷi vṛttam held significant importance in Uṇṇiyaccicaritam (Warrior 1977: 39, 40; Dileep Kumar 1988: 165) Bhāratam kiḷippāṭṭu and Ādhyātmarāmāyaṇam (Kurup 1992: 76).

The style of language found in Kunjan Nambiar's works can also be observed in this Ayyappan song. The instances and contexts in Gōvardhanacaritam and Bāṇayuddham further allow us to perceive Ayyappa devotion in this Teyyampāṭi hymn. The verses in Govardhanacaritam, which depict devotional fervor, have exerted influence over the Ayyappan devotion of the Teyyampāṭis. Similar lines such as "pālaya pālaya krișṇa nī naṅṅaḷeyum kālikaḷeyum vaikāte pāliccitēnam...kuśalamēkiṭēṇam krișṇa..." (Nambiar 2001: 373) and "onnunṭu viśeṣiccu ninnōtapēksikkunnu mandētarayām bhakti vanniṭēṇam nin pāde ennatumūlam bhavan vrndhārakādhipane nannāyanugrahiccanṅṅennēyumayakkēnam..." (Ibid: 378)," are evident in the Ayyappan bhakti hymns as well (Leaf 2, Page 1; Leaf 2, Page 2). The verses that vividly portray Ayyappan's warfare find similarity in terms and usages with those in Bāṇayuddham. For instance, phrases like "poṭupoṭeyaṅṅu poṭiccīṭukayo terutereyīvakayuḷḷil...śītaḷamāyoru māḷikamukaḷil...(Ibid: 382) ānatēr kālālkutirappaṭakaḷum...tēril karērinār... ālavaṭṭaṅṅaḷum vencāmaraṅṅaḷum aḻakinoṭa koṭa taḻakal... palarōtēṟṟu paṭaveṭṭuvatināyiṭṭu kōṭṭaṅṅal kūṭāte...kaṭuttila multtaṭi vāḷum vēlu venmaḻu gadayum kuntam śūlam paraśu parśvadha vaṭṭaka... nalla kaṭittila curikakaḷīṭṭikalōṭṭuḷi... vaṭṭappariśa tuṭakkiṭumappōl eṭṭujagattukal neṭṭiṭunnu veṭṭumiṭikku samanām khōram nisdhuramārttu kaḷiccum puḷaccum...(Ibid: 392-394) terutere vīṇuviraccutuṭaṅṅi... (Ibid: 402)" which resonate in these verses, can also be found within Ayyappan's song (Leaf 1/70, Page 1 and 2; Leaf 2/71, Page 1; Leaf 1/71, Page 2; Leaf 3/72, Page 2; Leaf 1, Page 1; Leaf 4/73, Page 1; Leaf 1, Page 2). This resemblance clearly indicates that the medieval style of language has influenced the Ayyappan bhakti hymns among the Teyyampāṭis as well.

However, the song also contains a plethora of Sanskritized modern language elements. There are efforts to localize terms like "maṇḍala"

as "maṇṇalam", "daṇḍu" as "daṇṇu", "maṅgalyam" as "maṅṅalyam", "nandār viḷakku" as "nannār viḷakku", "mandāram" as "mantāram" and "iṣṭam" as "itam" within the song. Both "hari" in Sanskrit and "ari" in Malayalam are referenced in the song. Words such as "nāgam", "śūlam", "maddaḷam", "pārthan", "nāthan", "bhūtatalanāyakan", "bhūtappaṭa", "ādiyil", "vēdiyar", "deyvam", "sthānam", "vēgam", "iṣṭam", "bhūti", "gītam", "ānandam," "dhvani", "kaḷabham", "bhuvanam", "khōram", "pīdham", "garudam", "śaram", "bhaṅgi" and "kṣētrapālan" are present in the manuscript. All of these are clear instances of modern Sanskritized vocabulary and features.[80]

The presence of Sanskrit words in the manuscript doesn't indicate that it was entirely composed in modern times. Such an argument may not be historically accurate.The influence of Puranas and Saskrit had already entered South Indian languages in the early period, even before the influence of the Arya-Brahmans (Nair 1995: 101). This occurred through the dissemination of Buddhism and Prakrit in south India (Subbarayalu, 2014: 35-37; Zvelebil, 1975; Hart, 1999). Sanskrit holds significant importance in non-Brahmanic rites (Shibi: 144-147, 206-213). This was not influenced by the Brahmans.

All non-Brahmans, such as Kaṇiyāns, Tīyyans, Vēlar, Puḷḷuvar, Nairs, Accans, Tiyyāṭis, Teyyampāṭis, Kuruppus etc., hold a strong Sanskrit tradition (Ibid). Their rituals and associated sacred texts are rooted in the Sanskrit language. These texts are crafted in a blend of Sanskrit and vernacular languages. Consequently, terms like nākam, pūtam, maṇṇalam, teyvam, tānam, and pītam can be traced in the hybrid Sanskrit language within the sacred texts of non-Brahman communities since the medieval period's inception. Famous examples of this hybrid language within the Buddhist-Jain tradition include Cilappatikāram, Maṇimēkhai, Jīvakacintāmaṇi, Kuṇḍalakēśi, and Nīlakēśi. The Sanskrit-Malayalam mixed songs of the Teyyampāṭis also perpetuate this hybrid tradition. It's possible that the influence of modern Sanskrit on the Malayalam language led to nākam, formerly present in leaf, being transcribed as nāgam. A similar evolution could

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80 Opinion stated by K. V. Dileep Kumar. Interview, Kalady, 25. 07. 2023.

be seen in words like pūtam transforming into bhūtam, teyvam into deyvam, maṇṇalam into maṇḍalam, and pītam into pīdham. This shift may have taken place during the 19th century when Natōra Rāman was transcribing the leaf. This linguistic transformation might have begun with the transition of the Buddhist or non-Brahman deity Ayyappan into Śiva. In essence, it is plausible to assume that the medieval palm leaves were copied during the 19th century, marking a phase of linguistic evolution.

V. CONCLUSION

The realm of Arya bhakti in medieval Kerala revolved around a handful of Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava temples and the bhakti hymns composed within their precincts. The governance of the state, economic structures, and social systems of medieval Kerala were centralised under the auspices of the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava temples, which were overseen by the Arya Brahmans. In essence, the Arya Brahmans wielded substantial control through the conduit of Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava devotion, effectively governing medieval Kerala. This argument has persisted in medieval historical studies for the past fifty years. However, it's worth revisiting whether the historical narrative of devotion in medieval Kerala was indeed encapsulated solely by a handful of Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava temples and the accompanying hymns of praise. In medieval-modern Kerala, the majority of the populace engaged in worship of non-Brahman deities, including Ayyappan, Bhagavati, Nāgam, and Cāttan. These forms of worship are now recognized as non-Brahman rituals such as Teyyam, Tira, Muṭiyēṟṟu, Tīyyāṭṭu, Paṭayaṇi, Kaḷameḻuttu, and so forth. All of these non-Brahman rituals took place outside the confines of the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava temples of Arya Brahmans. The entire non-Brahman community of Kerala also seems to have partaken in this non-Brahman bhakti. Medieval records substantiate these practices. However, until now, no study has ventured to explore or investigate their historical origins. Present-day research has tended to categorize these practices as folklore, devil worship, and exorcism, focusing solely on the rituals, songs, ceremonies, and contemporary recollections associated with them.

This type of observation was initially documented in colonial records, and subsequent studies stemming from colonialism followed these observations. Consequently, studies have interpreted Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava worship as a form of devotion and a higher mode of worship. Simultaneously, these studies perceived non-Brahman rituals as a lower form of worship, categorized as devil worship and exorcism. Even rituals involving deities like Ayyappan, Bhagavati, Nāgam and Cāttan were thus construed as devil worship. The primary reason underlying their interpretation of these rituals as demon worship was the fact that these practices bore no resemblance to the Vedic-Puranic-Sastric tradition of Brahman worship. However, evidence contradicting the assertions of current studies has emerged from collections of palm leaves held by Teyyampāṭis in north Kerala. These palm leaf collections reveal that a cult like Kaḷameḻuttu is supported by a foundation of sacred texts. Among these palm leaves, the Teyyampāṭis possess devotional hymns extolling deities such as Bhagavati, Ayyappan and Vēṭṭakorumakan. Among these, we have closely examined the devotional poetry dedicated to the worship of Ayyappan.

Throughout the song, Ayyappan is depicted as a mountain god and a hunting deity. Ayyappan is portrayed as a fierce deity with a penchant for warfare. The song extols Ayyappan's hunting prowess and highlights his inclination towards warfare. The records also make mention of the significance of Ayyappan temples during the time when the songs were transcribed into the palm leaves. The pivotal aspect of these palm leaves lies in the instructions detailing how to perform the bhakti hymns dedicated to Ayyappan. These palm leaves precisely outline the name by which Ayyappan should be invoked in each temple. These instructions bear the hallmarks of brahmanisation and Śaiva-Puranic revival. Priests are advised to transform the name Ayyappan into Śaiva-related forms such as Maṇikaṇḍan, Harihara putran and Bhūtattār. This process of brahmanising the non-Brahman Ayyappan is evident within the texts. This process, whether applied to Ayyappan as the mountain god or the hunting god, is discernible across medieval documents. The connection between Ayyappan

and Puranas also materializes during medieval times. The traces of this brahmanisation and Śaiva-Purana revival, evident throughout medieval records, are likewise present within these Teyyampāṭis-held palm leaves.

In any event, these palm leaves encompass a textual tradition that explicates non-Brahman devotions. Not only Ayyappan worship, but also Bhagavati, Nāga and Cāttan worship, are documented within palm leaves. The non-Brahman community plays a significant role in the devotion of Ayyappan, Bhagavati, Nāga and Cāttan. The Teyyampāṭi hymn dedicated to Ayyappan serves as a prominent exemplar of this non-Brahman devotion. Hymns extolling Ayyappan's supernatural might find their place in these records. The palm leaves celebrate Ayyappan's valorous feats in hunting and warfare, designating him as the central figure of devotion. Recognized as the Lord of the fourteen worlds and all-powerful, Ayyappan confers blessings and strength upon his adherents. The history of non-Brahman bhakti, hitherto unexplored, is thus chronicled within these palm leaves. It is plausible to hypothesize that these medieval palm leaves might have been transcribed during the 19th century.

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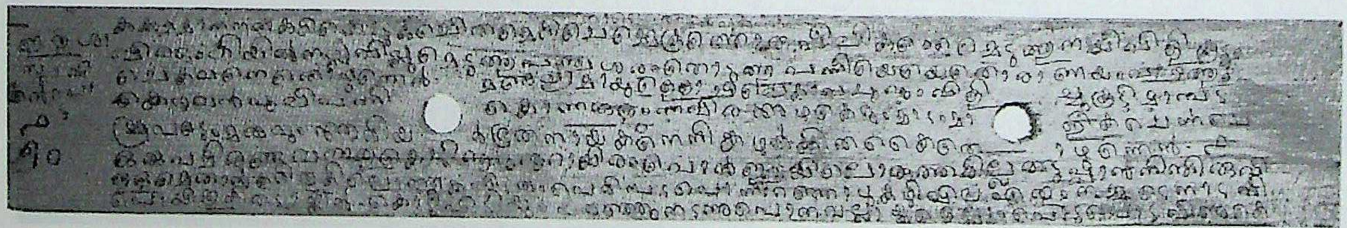
Sreevalsan Tiyyadi.Thrissur, 27.07.2023.

Raman Nampiar. Thruppunithara, 27.07.2023.

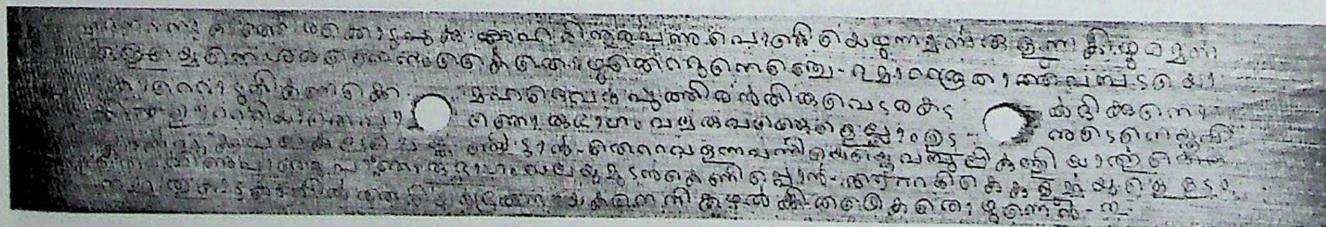
V. V. Haridas. Calicut University, 27.07.2023.

VIII. APPENDIX

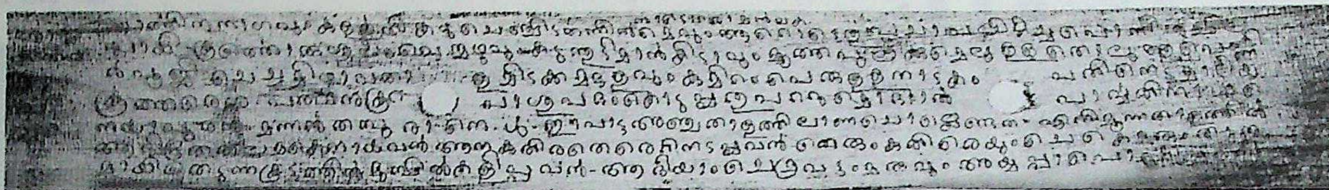
PHOTOGRAPHS OF PALM LEAVES



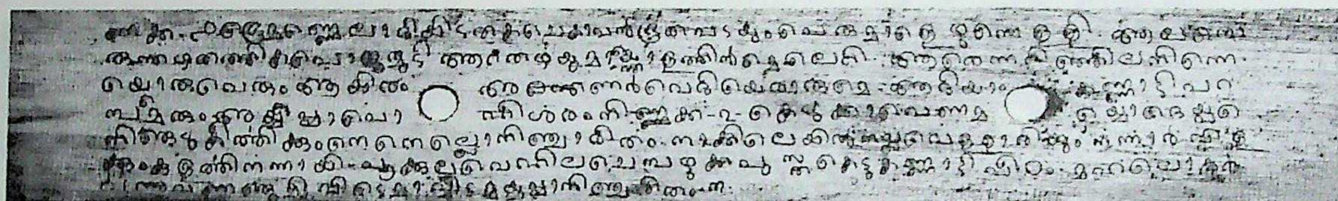
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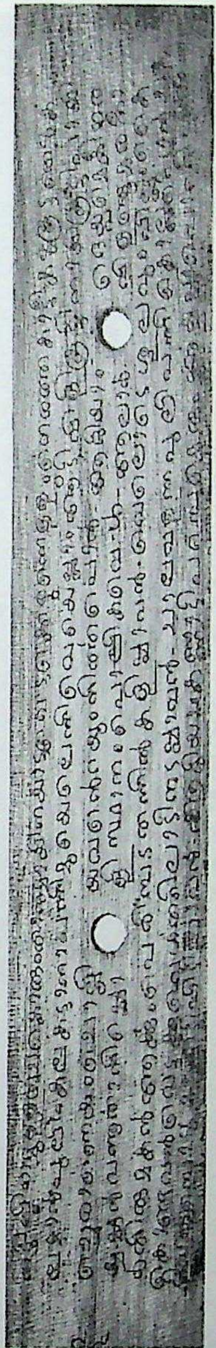
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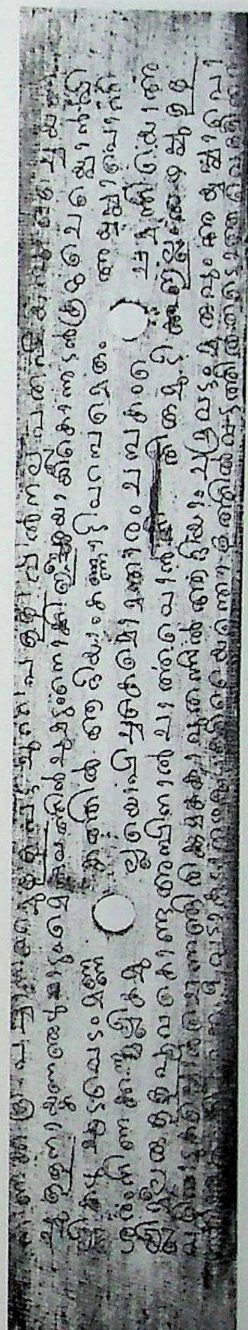
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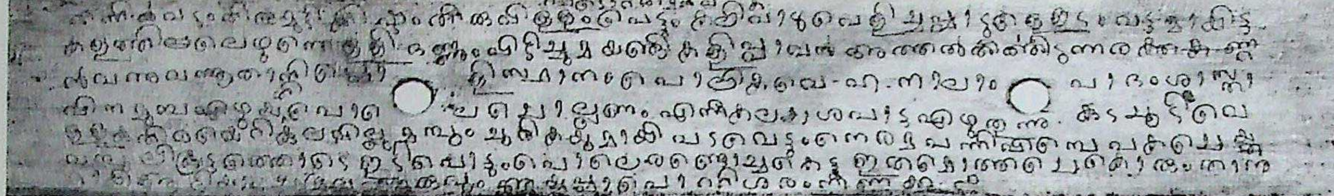
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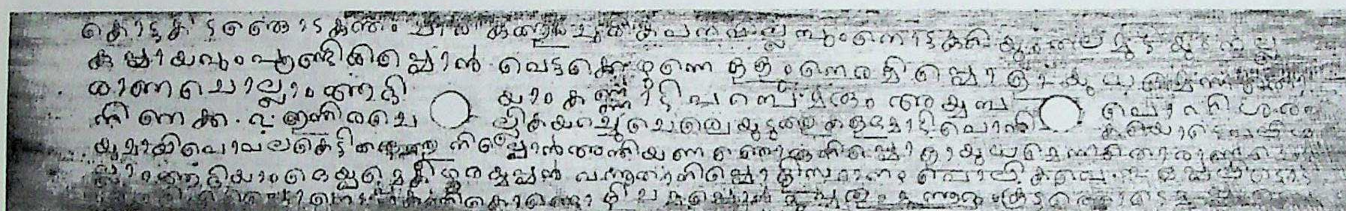
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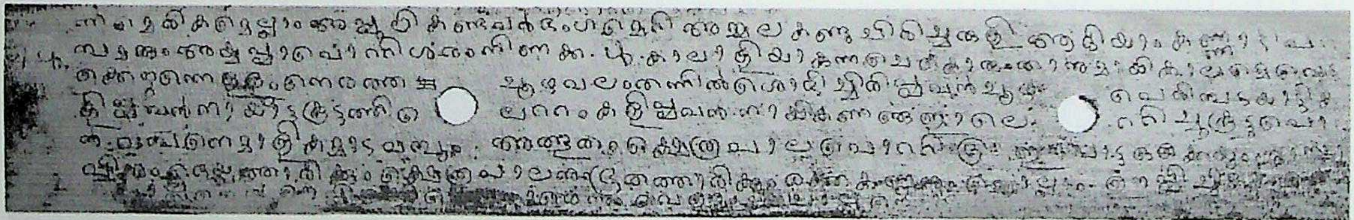
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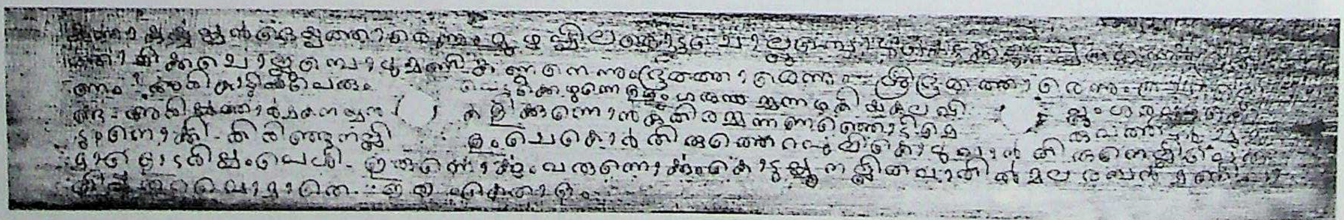
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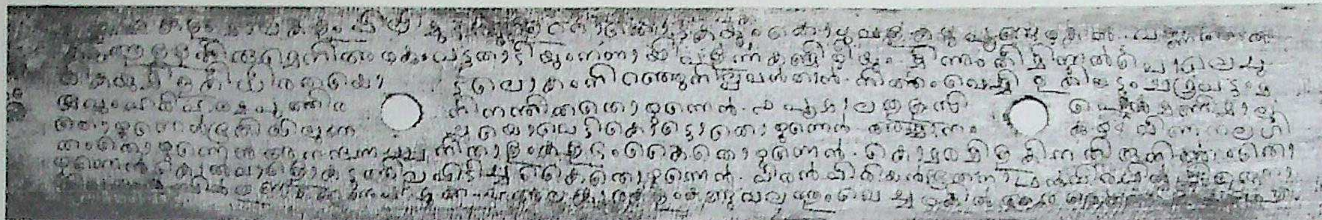
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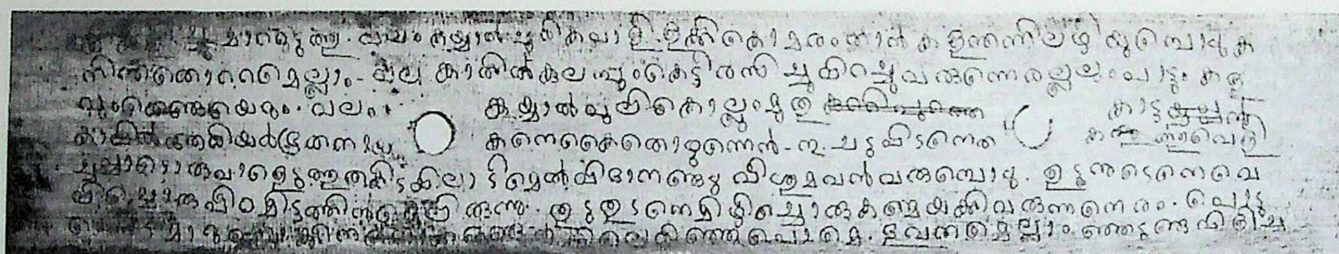
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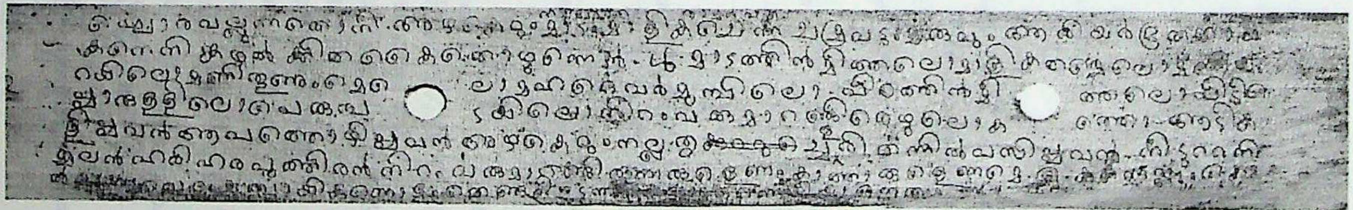
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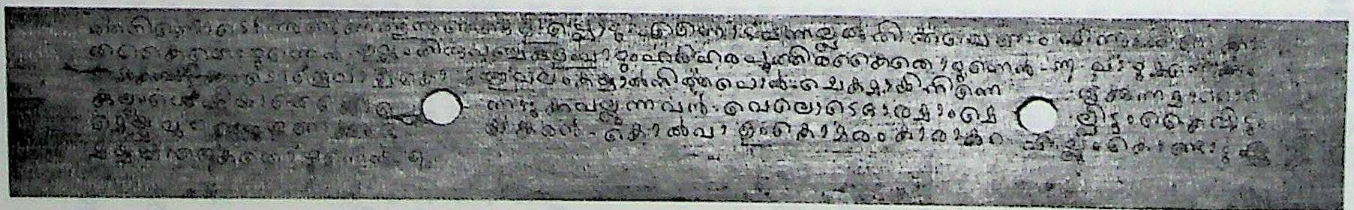
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Index

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Y

AYYAPPAN HYMNS

OF *KAḶAMEḺUTTU* IN NORTH MALABAR

A Historical Study

Editor: Shibi K.

KC HR

This book re-examines non-Brahman ritual traditions in Kerala by challenging the assumption that they are purely oral and historically marginal. Focusing on *Kaḷameḻuttu* and related rituals of North Malabar, it critiques scholarly discourses that privileged Brahmanical traditions while dismissing non-Brahman practices as folklore or demon worship. Drawing on palm-leaf manuscripts preserved by Teyyampāṭi priestly families, the study reveals a sustained textual tradition within non-Brahman ritual culture. Special attention to hymns dedicated to Ayyappan highlights a vibrant form of non-Brahman *bhakti* that developed outside Brahmanical temples. By examining the relationship between ritual performance, iconography, and text, the book repositions these traditions within the broader history of South Indian *bhakti*.

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